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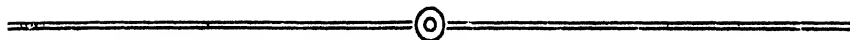
Principal Prof. V. N. BHUSHAN. Wadia College, Poona.



# KIRNAVALI

ONE :

THE PEACOCK LUTE





" They brought their peacock-lutes of praise  
And carven gems in jasper trays,  
Rich stores of fragrant musk and myrrh,  
And wreaths of scarlet nenuphar..... "

---

**SAROJINI NAIDU**

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# THE PEACOCK LUTE

[ ANTHOLOGY OF POEMS IN ENGLISH  
BY INDIAN WRITERS ]

*Edited by*

V. N. BHUSHAN



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by Indian writers]

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# CONTENTS

: Crossing The Rubicon ... ..	ix
: Behold The Blossoms ... ..	xv
: Poets and Poems ... ..	1
: Bibliography ... ..	139

## POETS and POEMS

: AUROBINDO, SRI	
Invitation ... ..	2
Transformation ... ..	3
Revelation ... ..	3
The Bird of Fire ... ..	3
The Rose of God ... ..	4
: BHUSHAN, V. N.	
Diwali ... ..	7
“ So-Ham ” ... ..	8
Dream, Mortals ... ..	9
The Light Beyond ... ..	10
: BOSE, BUDDHADEVA	
Do you Remember an Inn, Miranda ? ...	12
A Thought in Autumn ... ..	13
Sudden South Wind ... ..	13
: CHATTOPADHAY, ASHU	
Fleeting Moments ... ..	14
The Refusal ... ..	15
: CHATTOPADHYAYA, HARINDRANATH	
Noon ... ..	17
The Earthen Goblet ... ..	18
Contraries ... ..	18
A Call to Poets ... ..	19
Noontide of Souls ... ..	21
: CHETTUR, G. K.	
Sonnet XVIII ... ..	23
Sonnet XIX ... ..	24
Black-Lead ... ..	24
: CHETTUR, S. K.	
Red Lotus ... ..	27
Conquest ... ..	27
The Glow-worm ... ..	28

: CHORDIA, S. S. L.					
We are blind	...	...	...	...	30
Mira	...	...	...	...	31
The Pilgrim	...	...	...	...	32
: DHINGRA, BALDOON					
Comes Ever the Dawn	...	...	...	...	33
The Unconquerable	...	...	...	...	35
Day and Night	...	...	...	...	36
: DUTT, MICHAEL M.					
To a Star during a cloudy night	...	...	...	...	39
Extract from <i>The Captive Ladie</i>	...	...	...	...	39
Satan	...	...	...	...	40
: DUTT, TORU					
Sita	...	...	...	...	43
The Lotus	...	...	...	...	44
: GHOSE, KASHIPROSAD					
The Boatmen's Song to Ganga	...	...	...	...	46
The Moon in September	...	...	...	...	46
: GHOSE, MANMOHAN					
London	...	...	...	...	49
April	...	...	...	...	50
: KABIR, HUMAYUN					
Faith	...	...	...	...	54
Mahatma	...	...	...	...	54
The <i>Padma</i>	...	...	...	...	55
: KAIKINI, P. R.					
The Donkey	...	...	...	...	58
The Millionaire...	...	...	...	...	58
Nocturne	...	...	...	...	60
: KASHYAP, MOHANLAL					
Rakshabandhan	...	...	...	...	62
On Brinda's Sands	...	...	...	...	63
: KRISHNAMURTI J.					
Poems II and VIII from					
<i>The Immortal Friend</i>	...	...	...	...	65
: KRISHNAMURTI, M.					
To The Fighter Command	...	...	...	...	72
The Wagon	...	...	...	...	73
The Harijan	...	...	...	...	73
A Prayer	...	...	...	...	74
: MENEZES, ARMANDO					
Ode to Beauty	...	...	...	...	75
Aspiration	...	...	...	...	78
Way and Goal	...	...	...	...	79
: NIZAMAT JUNG					
Ideal Beauty	...	...	...	...	81
Spirit of Light	...	...	...	...	81
: NILIMA DEVI					
The Lady of the Night	...	...	...	...	84
This, our Life	...	...	...	...	85

: ROZ, DILIP KUMAR					
The New Advent	...	...	...	...	87
Buddha's Face	...	...	...	...	88
The Lesson	...	...	...	...	89
: SARABHAI, BHARATI					
Two choruses from					
<i>The Well of the People</i>	...	...	...	...	91
: SAROJINI NAIDU					
Palanquin-Bearers	...	...	...	...	97
Coromandel Fishers	...	...	...	...	97
Indian Dancers	...	...	...	...	98
To India	...	...	...	...	99
Bangle Sellers	...	...	...	...	99
: SEAL, BRAJENDRANATH					
• Nature Unveiled	...	...	...	...	102
: SESHADRI, P.					
At the Temple	...	...	...	...	107
Rakshabandhan	...	...	...	...	107
The Teacher	...	...	...	...	108
: SETHNA, H. D.					
Waterfalls	...	...	...	...	109
The Sea	...	...	...	...	110
: SETHNA, K. D.					
The Triumph of Dante	...	...	...	...	111
Truth-Vision	...	...	...	...	112
: SETHNA, MINNIE D.					
The Flutter at Twilight	...	...	...	...	113
Sanctuary	...	...	...	...	114
: SHAHID, SUHRAWARDY					
Under the Trees	...	...	...	...	116
When you arise	...	...	...	...	117
: TAGORE, RABINDRANATH					
Leave this chanting	...	...	...	...	118
Where the mind is without fear	...	...	...	...	119
Deliverance	...	...	...	...	119
: TAGORE, SUBHO					
My Poem	...	...	...	...	121
The Mob	...	...	...	...	122
: THADANI, N. V.					
A Vision	...	...	...	...	125
The Lord of Life	...	...	...	...	127
: UMAMAHESHWAR, S.					
Beauty's in our midst	...	...	...	...	131
I built a dome	...	...	...	...	132
: VIVEKANANDA, SWAMI					
The Song of the Free	...	...	...	...	135
The Song of the Sannyasin	...	...	...	...	136

अरसिकेषु कवित्व निवेदनम् ।  
शिरसि मा लिख मा लिख मा लिख ॥

## CROSSING THE RUBICON

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The culling and collecting of flowers—whether from one's own garden or from those of others—is always a pleasant pastime. It is essentially an aesthetic experience whose value is beyond words—an experience with colours, forms, and fragrances. As with the gathering of flowers—so with the collecting of poems. It has been a favourite hobby of all enthusiastic artists—down from the time of Meleager, the world's first great anthologist. The Greek idea of an anthology—which literally means “a gathering of flowers”—has a peculiar significance. Explained in modern scientific terminology—it corresponds to Darwin's formula of the survival of the fittest—the fittest that deserve to be preserved, and presented to the public. It also implies a fastidious severity in selection on the part of the anthologist. But impeccable taste and infallible judgment are not always the monopoly of an anthologist! Human that he is, he is liable to have his lapses. But as long as his motives are sincere, as long as his aims are laudable, and as long as he does not descend to the debased level of distributing favours to those who do not deserve them or of withholding recognition from those who are entitled to it—he should be tolerated. All that is obviously artistic—possessing excellence of one kind or another—has a legitimate place in representative anthologies.

Indo-English poetry—which is slightly more than a century old—and which has grown in both quality and quantity all these years—has arrived at a stage when it needs to be anthologised. It was Richard Garnett who once said: “As the existence of a great river in a civilised country involves that of dykes, and quays, and bridges, so the existence of a great literature implies the ministrations of literary officials engaged in winnowing the bad from the good, and helping the latter to permanence.” In its own way, this anthology seeks to discharge this function. The other aims and objects with which this anthology and the others to follow have been planned—are indicated in the Publishers' note elsewhere. Speaking of this work for the time being, I am not unaware of the few anthologies of Indo-English poetry published till now. But I am absolutely certain that an anthology of this kind—comprehensive



in scope, cosmopolitan in nature, and with a definite design—has not been brought out by anybody so far. Much work is being done in the various provincial literatures of India, but Indo-English literature—especially, Indo-English poetry—is neither here nor there—a full-blooded orphan languishing for want of proper care and recognition. Patriotic sentiments and political prejudices have no legitimate place in literature—which is the international of the spirit. Merit has to be encouraged and esteemed from whatever quarter and in whatever form it shows itself. It is with this view that *The Peacock Lute* is presented to the public. Care has been taken not to omit those who deserve to be included and not to include those who deserve to be omitted. Yet, I am aware of the fact that it is not easy to please all tastes and satisfy all demands. But for all genuine slips of omission and commission the Editor apologises in the significant letters which shrewd businessmen use for their bills—“ E. & O. E.”



*The Peacock Lute* carries the sub-title—anthology of poems in English by Indian writers. That clearly indicates the nature and scope of this volume—and requires no further elucidation. But a few deviations may be mentioned and explained. Rabindranath Tagore—above all classifications and labels—is not an Indo-English poet in the sense in which the term has been understood for the purpose of this work. He has not written any worth-mentioning poems directly in English. Yet, strangely enough, an anthology of Indo-English poetry without his work is inconceivable. The truth is, Tagore has so permeated the whole of Indian literature—in whatever language it is written—to such an extent that he has become an inescapable literary factor. So a justification is found for including him here—by taking three pieces from *Gitanjali*—a work which Tagore himself translated into English. On the same principle the work of a few others—Prof. Humayun Kabir, Sri Buddhadeva Bose and Sri Subho Tagore—is included. All these four in whose case an exception is made—illustrate one phase in the development of Indo-English poetry. All of them are capable of writing poetry directly in English and have indeed done so. But for some reason or other, they have set their faces against such an activity and have been writing poetry in their own language. Obviously, they seem to feel that English is an inadequate medium for the direct expression of their thoughts and emotions. One cannot, of course, find fault with their decision. But the problem is a more com-

plicated one than it appears to be, and is discussed in detail elsewhere.

Another departure—which is not likely to be noticed by many—may be mentioned ; and that is giving the first place in the anthology to Sri Aurobindo and his poems. The poets included have been arranged in alphabetical order—if for no reason, at least to escape the charge of making invidious distinctions ! Anthologies do not assign ranks to poets ; it is the privilege of the reading public to do so. And the poets themselves create their ranks—by the merit their work possesses. According to the alphabetical order, Sri Aurobindo should, strictly speaking, come under “ G ”—for “ Ghose ” is his family name. Yes, but he has himself dropped that family label long back—and is today widely known by his Christian name. He has outgrown the stage of being known by the family to which he belongs ! Further, it was thought appropriate that the anthology should begin with one of the profoundest living Indo-English poets. His name and his poems will be in the nature of a blessing. And, as it happens, the anthology closes with Swami Vivekananda—another profound singer of spiritual truths. What better guardian spirits can this anthology have than Sri Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda ?



And what is the principle, pray, that has been followed in selecting the poets and the poems included in this anthology ? This question may be answered by a seemingly impertinent statement that no decent anthology of poems—whether edited by F. T. Palgrave or W. B. Yeats or V. N. Bhushan—ever follows a very hard and fast principle. The anthology is the thing. The artist is known by what he omits—said Schiller. So, too, the anthologist. He is also known by what he omits, and, of course, by implication, by what he includes. An anthology of poems has to be judged, thus,—both by what it includes and by what it omits, and it stands or falls accordingly. I have attempted to present here—without fear or favour—poets and poems well worthy to be represented in an anthology of this kind. The literatures of the different colonies of the Empire are coming into their own and claiming wide attention, but Indo-English literature is still shrouded in great obscurity. If this attempt of mine helps to lift that to some extent at least, it will not have been made in vain.

Indo-English poets are indeed numerous—as the bibliography shows and suggests. Attempt has been made to make the bibliography as complete as possible, but I am certain that it has still

several gaps. Many are the handicaps in the collection of material of this kind. There is no central institution or organisation which keeps a record of the publications of our poets. Several of them publish their works often for private circulation, and often personally—and therefore do not reach the wider public. In spite of all these difficulties in the way, I have, I think, succeeded in gathering a good amount of material which may prove useful to any research worker in the field. As for the poets selected—I have not done so arbitrarily. Much thinking has been done in the matter—and the result, I hope, will cause no cavilling. A few poets like Sri Ananda Acharya I had perforce to leave out—because I could not, in spite of my best efforts, trace them or get permission to include their poems. Some others I had regretfully to omit on account of exigencies of space. For the same reason, I could not include more poems of the selected poets. And those who are aware of the difficulty in securing adequate paper these days will understand this surely. Further, I have included a few—who may not be called poets in the orthodox sense of the word, poets like Mr. J. Krishnamurti and Swami Vivekananda. But who will accuse me of having gone out of the way? My intention is to represent as many as possible of the important aspects of Indo-English poetry. Poets like Kashiprosad Ghose and Michael Madhusudan Dutt are included chiefly on account of their historical importance. Writers like Sreemathi Nilima Devi, Sreemathi Bharati Sarabhai, Mr. Shahid Suhrawardy, Mr. Subho Tagore and Mr. P. R. Kaikini represent the modern (or modernist?) phase of Indo-English poetry. Poets like Sri Aurobindo, Sri Dilip Kumar Roy, Mr. K. D. Sethna, Sir Brajendranath Seal represent the new movement of idealistic thought in Indo-English poetry. Some—Manmohan Ghose, the Chettur brothers, Profs. Armando Menezes, S. S. L. Chordia, Baldoon Dhingra, Seshadri, Thadani,—exhibit their technical merit in handling difficult verse-forms. Thus, important interests and aspects have been sought to be represented here.

A word may be said in general about the poems. Selection is always a difficult thing—especially where poetry is the material. It is always possible to suggest alternatives and substitutes. In some cases, I have taken the help of the poets themselves or their friends. In other instances—I have depended upon my own judgment. On the whole, my main concern has been with two things—the poems and the poets. And both in the biographical notes and the selections I have tried to get at one thing—‘the poet in his poetry, his poetry in the poet.’ Aware as I am of the saying that he who tries to please all pleases none, I shall be happy if my

work causes no ill-feeling ; I shall be happier if my work helps Indo-English poetry to receive the wide public recognition it merits ; and I shall be most happy if the anthology affords its readers some bright moments of artistic enjoyment and aesthetic delight.



There is a little more of the ceremonial to be observed—one which courtesy suggests and convention demands. That is the thanksgiving ceremony ! Having undertaken an uphill work—I had to put several friends under obligation. There are first the poets themselves—without whose ready co-operation I could not have begun the work. I shall not name them one by one and thank them individually. Alike to those who felt that they were doing me a service and to those who felt that they were doing themselves a service—I offer my grateful thanks for permission to use selections from their works and for helping me with other necessary information. In the case of some writers, I am thankful to others. Thus, my thanks are due to the representatives of the late Rabindranath Tagore and Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd., for permission to include three selections from *Gitanjali* ; to the Oxford University Press and Principal B. N. Seal of the Elphinstone College, Bombay, for permission to use an extract from *The Quest Eternal* by the late Sir Brajendranath Seal ; to the Registrar, Calcutta University, for permission to include two poems of the late Manmohan Ghose, and also to Miss Lotika Ghose for help in that connection ; to the Star Publishing Trust, Adyar, Madras, for permission to use two poems from *The Immortal Friend* by J. Krishnamurti, and also to Mr. D. K. Telang in the same connection ; to Mr. Zahir Ahmed, B.A., H.C.S., Deputy Revenue Secretary, Hyderabad State (Deccan), for sending me some of the poems and biographical details of Nawab Sir Nizamat Jung Bahadur ; to Prof. P. R. Krishnaswami (Kumbakonam), Mr. P. V. Acharya (Delhi) and Mr. P. Gopala Krishna (Madras), brother and sons, respectively, of the late Principal P. Seshadri for permission to use poems from his publications and for biographical information ; to Mr. L. K. Balaratnam and Mr. S. Rajagopal (Trivandrum) for permission to include the poems of the late Prof. S. Umamaheshwar and for biographical details ; to the President, Advaita Ashram, Mayavati, Almora (U.P.), for permission to use two poems of Swami Vivekananda ; and to distinguished friends like Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta (Pondicherry), Dr. S. N. Ray (Dacca), Mr. Kalipada Mukherjee, (Hoomgarh), and Prof. R. K. Sud (Lahore), for help in many matters. I must also thank Sreemathi Sophia Wadia, Founder (and soul) of the P. E. N. All-

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And here goes *THE PEACOCK LUTE*—a votive offering at the altar of Indo-English poetry !

—V. N. B.

## BEHOLD THE BLOSSOMS

---

Many were the hands that fashioned into form the marble dream of Taj Mahal ; and many the voices that have been echoing the song-destiny of India. And as that ' crystal tear-drop on the blue cheek of eternity ' has survived the passing centuries as a world-admired wonder, so the temple of Indian Song has been there for ages—claiming from time to time the homage of different votaries with different visions and voices. In the enchanted wonderland of verbal melody where far-flying thought-birds keep tryst with visions that perish never, our poets weave evergreen garlands of sound and scent and hue—in adoration of everlasting Love, eternal Beauty and universal Truth.

Numerous have been the Indian worshippers at the shrine of the Muse. The Indo-English poets—those who use the medium of the English language for their poetic utterance—are a comparatively new band—whose ancestry goes back roughly to only a century. " From low beginnings we date our winnings." The casual references to India in the poetry of English writers like Chaucer, Spenser, Sidney, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Southey, Moore, Shelley and others ; the advent into India of English educationists like David Hare, Sir Hyde East, Henry De Rozio and David Lester Richardson, and their attempts to impart English education to our young men ; the efforts of Indian reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Keshub Chander Sen towards wider diffusion of English instruction ; the famous ' minute ' of Lord Macaulay—then Law Member of the Governor-General's Council and President of the Committee of Public Instruction—urging the necessity of making the ' natives of the country good English scholars ' ; Lord Bentinek's Resolution (1835) that ' the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European Literature and Science among the natives of India, and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone,' the appearance of quite a large body of independent, though superficial, poems on Indian subjects by Britishers like Sir William Jones,

Monier Williams, Sir Edwin Arnold, Sir Alfred Lyall, Henry De Rozio, D. L. Richardson, John Leyden, Bishop Heber, Meredith Parker, Laurence Hope (Mrs. Violet Nicholson), Trego Webb, William Waterfield, H. G. Keene, Rudyard Kipling, Oswald Couldrey and others—who were all residents of India for long or short periods ;—these constitute the significant background of Indo-English poetry. In addition, a state of stagnation in our provincial literatures and the consequent desire of our poets to seek ‘fresh fields and pastures new,’ a craving to imitate the English language and literature, and a general yearning after the attraction of novelty—these also spurred the advent of Indian writers of verse in English. With the passing years, the work of this band has increased both in quantity and quality and has assumed considerable dimensions. Most of this extensive activity belongs to the present century. But whether it belongs to the present or previous century— it constitutes an interesting phenomenon. The Indo-English poets form a varied body—belonging to all ranks and conditions of life—students, professors, lawyers, businessmen, educationists, civilian officers, administrators. They are a cosmopolitan group too. There are among them—Andhras, Bengalis. Canarese, Gujaratis, Maharashtrians, Malayalis, Punjabis, Sindhis, Tamilians. And they represent different faiths and communities—Hinduism, Muhammadanism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism. And among them all, they have produced all types of poetry—lyrics, epics, sonnets, story-poems, odes, blank verse, rhymed couplets, narrative poetry, *vers libre*, mock-heroic verse, satires and modernist experimental verse.

In saying this I do not mean to suggest that all Indo-English poetry is of first rate quality, that all that has been produced by our poets deserves to be embalmed and immortalised. Far from it. But, at the same time, it is unfair to think that there are not more than three or four good Indo-English poets who are worth any attention. The general reading public, both here and abroad, is aware of the names of only Toru Dutt, Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and to some extent, of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. It is my aim in this anthology to show that we have in our midst not just a few but quite a considerable number of Indo-English poets whose work merits attention and appreciation. Reviewing Kashiprosad Ghose’s first book of poems in English, D. L. Richardson wrote in the *Literary Gazette*, Calcutta, for November 1, 1834 : “ Let some of these narrow minded persons who are in the habit of looking down on the natives of India with arrogant and vulgar contempt read this little poem and ask themselves—could they write better

verses not in a foreign tongue but their own." The challenge—which is an obvious exaggeration in the particular instance—holds good in the case of the work of several of our poets in recent years. The discriminating reader and discerning critic will not fail to find among the Indo-English poets writers whose work is full of sweetness and fluency of native genius, strength and originality of conception, beauty and skill of craftsmanship. Introducing to its readers a series of articles on contemporary American writers, *The London Mercury* for November 1925, observed editorially: "In a general way we do not favour the laying of emphasis upon the country of origin of a book. Books are good or bad, interesting or dull. The more good ones there are the better, and if good ones come from all the English-speaking countries the better still." It is my conviction that such good books have been produced by some of the Indo-English poets.

But why do Indian poets write in the English language which is not their own?—is a question that is often asked both by Indians and Englishmen. Indians who ask this question do not like their countrymen writing verse in English—first, because of a feeling of inferiority complex, secondly, out of a sense of awakened national consciousness, and, thirdly, on account of baseless prejudice. That we should develop our own languages and literatures and acquire proficiency in them is a fact which none will dispute or deny. But enthusiasm for this viewpoint should not prevent us from taking cognizance of an event of importance which has become part and parcel of our country's history. Three centuries of contact with the British and more than a century of the teaching of English in India have inevitably resulted in making some of our educated men and women feel quite at home in the language and literature of England. And if some of these feel confident that they can make use of English for expressing their creative thought, it should be regarded as a perfectly natural consequence, and not as an erratic escapade or as a sign of slave mentality. It is indeed a matter for credit that some of our countrymen have acquired such mastery in a language not their own that they are able to make use of it not merely for ordinary purposes but also for fashioning works which are worthy to be called literature. And let us also not forget the fact that while English literature has given us some new ideas and some fresh inspiration, the English language has helped us to make vocal to a wide public our inmost thoughts and feelings, our deep-felt desires and dreams, our hopes and yearnings, and our fancies and ecstasies. It may be asked at this stage—what, after all, do Indians



wish to achieve by writing poetry in English ?—Can they ever acquire mastery of the proper idiom and correct expression in that language ?—And then, is the English language quite suitable for the expression of Indian thought ? These are exasperating questions, but they may be answered to some extent. Indians writing poetry in English do so not with the intention of securing immortality in English literature, not with the fond hope of having a place by the side of Shakespeare or Shelley, but primarily because they feel quite proficient in that language, and secondly because they desire to reach a public larger than the one provided by their province or country. As for the inability of our countrymen to achieve mastery of the English language—it has been proved to be a hollow myth by some of our writers. And the doubt whether the English language is suited to the expression of subtle Indian thought is a groundless one. The English language has a marvellous capacity “to assimilate everything. . . (to) take any colour of thought, shade of suggestion, glow of feeling, pattern of experience and turn them into truly English effects—that is, effects achieved with perfect adequacy by English words.” And, it may further be added that “English verse with its infinite chiaroscuro and plastic possibility is out and out the best medium for any living vision, any momentous experience.” Conscious of the richness of their own thoughts, experiences and visions, and conscious also of the suitability of the English language for expressing these, the Indo-English poets seek to harmonize into a unique pattern the soul and body of their poetry.

Considered from another point of view, the problem of the Indo-English poets expressing themselves in a language not legitimately their own—does not appear to be odd at all. The typical Indian Mind is unique in several respects. Endowed by Nature with some of the choicest gifts, it has an instinctive understanding of even complicated problems and intricate ideas, and is capable of tremendous receptivity and wonderful assimilation. In the spirit of a real artist, the typical Indian Mind rejects as useless nothing that it comes across, but draws into itself the worthwhile radiance from all its points of contact, remoulds them after its own bright image, and presents them once again with a significance greater than they ever possessed. The influence of India's foreign invaders or conquerors has become an integral part of our great cultural inheritance. The Aryan thought, the Greek spirit, the Moghul traditions, the English culture—these are there in the background of the Indian Mind helping it to be a truly comprehensive and cosmopolitan one. The basic pattern of the Indian Mind is universal, and it is for this reason that it is able to assimilate in itself the patterns that come from outside with such

happy felicity as is beyond the possibility of the mind of the less fortunately placed non-English people of the world. Further, the Indo-English poets have been greatly influenced by the Renaissance that has been at work in this country during the last one century nearly—remoulding our whole National Being. Passionate in character, variegated in fabric, and dynamic in energy—the modern Indian Renaissance has been speeding up the sentiments and sacraments of our race, revitalizing the basic life and outlook of the people. Our intellectuals, especially, have been experiencing this tremendous thrill—realizing all the while the fact that India no longer should dwell in splendid isolation as of old, but be an important factor in the vast international organization of the modern world. It is this unique national and international experience that the Indo-English poets express in their poetry. In doing this they harness to their advantage the best of living languages, English. It is quite possible that the Indo-English poets might have written equally good, if not better, poetry in their own provincial languages. But how can they remain content with writing in their own tongue, when their varied experience transcends the narrow geographical limits of their own province and even the broad outlines of their country? The powerful and elastic English language alone offers them the best scope for the expression of their rich and cosmopolitan experience. And, as things stand, English happens to be the only language through which a free exchange of ideas even between our different provinces is possible.

If, therefore, any apology were necessary for collecting in this anthology some of the best specimens of Indo-English poetry and for asking that they be more widely known than they are, it is partly due to a desire to introduce to the Indian reader aspects of the larger culture that characterises the country outside his own province or language, and reinterpret for him through these essentially modern minds his ancient inheritance. Besides serving this purpose of synthesising the country's various and scattered currents of thought and emotion, it will help to acquaint friends of India outside with the spirit of her finer minds. The study of these poems and the background they imply will help a proper estimate of the capacity of our country in the literary, moral and artistic spheres. Thus the desire of bringing together these various trends of culture in our country into line with modern thought and life, and of helping the world outside to enter into the inner workings of a great and unfortunate people—have made English the medium of these poets. And it will be easily seen that if they do not reach the very highest qualities of creative expression, nevertheless they write in this language

with surprising ease and felicity. The use of this language familiarised to them by their education, their constant study of the best compositions of English writers, together with that native intellectual ripeness which enables them to express themselves through any medium—have helped them to achieve a praiseworthy level of naturalness and effectiveness in their use of the English language. The pantheism of a Shelley or the mysticism of a Wordsworth is a part of the ancient inheritance of the sensitive modern Indian. That is why he responds to them with unexpected ardour and eagerness. This response has come to him not merely as the result of a few decades of English education ; it has behind it the refinement of centuries of experience, a tradition embedded in the very instinctive or unconscious perceptions of mind. This intense sympathy with Western modes of thought gives him a comparative ease and freedom in his reading and writing of compositions in the Western languages. Thus his very insight into the subjects of these masterpieces enables him to follow subtleties of form and language. Thought and language, and thought and technique working through language, are all of a piece ; ultimately one and indivisible. The habitual and ready perception of the one naturally implies the same instinctive understanding and enjoyment of the other. To this extent, therefore, to which the Indian mind is familiar with English modes and feelings of thought, it is also, *ipso facto*, familiar in an equal measure with the language and technique and form of the poets. If Indo-English poetry is not 'a well of English pure and undefiled,'—still its achievement is considerable. The poems included in this anthology not only reveal an ear for the music of the language and a feeling for style, but in places they reach a perfection of form, a felicity of phrasing—possible only to a sense of consummate mastery over the idiom. And through all this one can glimpse the rich poetic aspiration and passion for noble and moving utterance. The point is not that the Indo-English poets write under a disadvantage ; it is obvious ; but what is noteworthy is that these poets transcend in a good measure their limitations, and achieve a lucid and noble power of expression.

The foreign reader trained in the thousand familiar harmonies of the English poets may find these poems lacking in all those *curioso felicitas* which he so much admires in his own. The imagery of some of them may add to his disappointment with their language. The Indian reader, too, may find it difficult to reconcile himself to the characteristic Indian imagery trying to be fitted into a foreign manner. The ancient symbols of poetic imagery and feeling, the sacred lotus and scented champak, and the gods and goddesses, may appear stripped of all their old associations and suggestiveness in a

rhythm so far different from that of his own speech. But surely these are not attempts at smashing the old idols but sincere and earnest endeavours to weave together different cultures and modes of expression. Such a synthesis is a matter of time ; it will take long to become naturalized. For one thing, it is unfair to judge Indo-English poets by the standards we apply to the best English or Indian poets. The comparative method of criticism is no doubt an invaluable aid to appreciation in any kind of art. But even so, there is a limit beyond which it may not be strained. The Indo-English poets are peculiar in the environment they come from, in the moods they express, and in the outlook they possess. If we forget this fact, it is only too easy to dismiss their work as being far below the level of English and Indian poetry. Such criticism is negative, and it judges from an irrelevant, if apparently lofty, point of view. If readers will see Indo-English poetry against the background of this country, they will not treat them so summarily. In the different languages of India lie many different traditions of experience and poetry, and there is at the moment no means of bringing all these diverse strands together into a common heritage except by way of transmitting them through English. The greatest dream that has inspired these Indo-English poets is to render the culture of their languages to others in India itself. The poems in this anthology, therefore, represent a great variety of thought and feeling. The metaphysical symbolism of the Upanishads, the contemplative passivity of Buddhism, the luscious eroticism of decadent Sanskrit poetry, the subtle symbolism of the singer-saints of South India, the sensuous court poetry of medieval India—all these and many such others are merged together in endless combinations in the work of the Indo-English poets. It is indeed the first attempt to synthesise the old and traditional cultures that have been lying embedded in the different provincial languages of India. And though much is lost in the transmission, there is ample evidence here for the Indian to enter into the modes of feeling of his fellow Indians who speak a different language. He will discover much that is common for the whole country, many virtues that nevertheless distinguish the different aspects of the common tradition. These poems, therefore, are the product of sensitive Indian minds trying to knit up and weave into a single fabric many threads from the ends of the country. If these poets represent different cultures and draw their inspiration from different languages, they have nevertheless the advantage of a unity of vision and education, because of their expression in English. They have been alive to the culture of the West, they have known and identified themselves in a great measure with the poets of other countries and to that extent,

therefore, these poems have a common background.

Englishmen who believe that Indo-English poetry is an imposture and, therefore, something to be ostracized, forget the fact that there never has been at any time such a thing as pure English literature. Its splendid fabric is "a coat of many colours," for, in the words of a well-known historian of English literature, "to its making have gone the prismatic fancy of the Celt, the sombre passion of the Teuton; the golden gaiety of France, Scandinavian greys and Italian purples." The Indo-English poets are now offering to English literature a new element—essentially spiritual and mystical. This offering of new thoughts, new imagery, new suggestions and new values to English poetry is not a predatory invasion into English literature, not an unholy desecration of the English language, but a sincere offertory to the richest language and literature in the present-day world. And English literature may well accept this for its own enrichment. In the past, the world of Latin literature had to admit within the ranks of its writers the Romans who pursued the Muses in distant provinces and colonies and even men of foreign birth belonging to their empire who aspired successfully to literary composition in Latin. England, too, will have to think in such terms. She has established limitless contacts with a variety of races and countries. And her language and literature have spread far and wide. It is the duty of England and Englishmen not only to encourage but also to recognise the achievements of others who choose to express themselves in English. Indo-English poetry has now travelled far on the road of progress and perfection—gathering new glories and achieving new wonders. The blossoms gathered in the following pages will, I feel sure, make the reader realise what a significant group of singers the best Indo-English poets constitute—a group whose voice deserves to be heard and echoed wherever good poetry is esteemed. It is the poetry of a people who are denizens of the

.....sweet Indian land  
Whose air is balm ; whose ocean spreads  
O'er coral rocks and amber beds ;  
Whose mountains pregnant by the beam  
Of the warm sun with diamonds teem ;  
Whose rivulets are like rich brides  
Lovely with gold beneath their tides ;  
Whose sandal groves and bowers of spice  
Might be Peri's Paradise !



In nothing is the story of India more complete and characteristic than in the long process of her assimilation of the moral and intel-

lectual influences of her invaders and foreign rulers. That our temples came from our conquerors, that a style of architecture was adopted from the Moghul or the Persian, that a particular tune represents a strange medley of the native and the exotic, that our schools of painting have sometimes taken to forms of expression alien to us—these do not detract from the greatness of our people. Here, through the ages, has been living and growing an exceptionally fruitful and receptive spirit—that has often indulged its hunger and passion for other forms of expression at the cost of its material concerns. There is something elevating and reassuring when one contemplates the secret spirit and strength of a people so obviously lost to all political action, still preserving somewhere in the depths of their being—above the controversies of the day, its passing bitterness, its confusions, its hymns of hate—a dignified and reposeful sense of all the maturer values of life. Indo-English poetry is an authentic expression of that same spirit in Modern India. When the history of our country comes to be written, when the future historian takes up his work in a calm and contemplative mood, forgetting the bitter wranglings between the people of India and her rulers, he will surely be struck by the quiet spirit of the Indo-English poets that has been actively searching for all the finer elements in British life and thought. He will be struck by the way in which India's political backwardness is redeemed by the eagerness of some of her finer minds to catch, absorb and re-express the glorious aspects of a different country, to draw into their own old traditions, a new breath of inspiration. Not all Indo-English poetry will survive as a thing of glory ; but that which will survive and the spirit that animates it will remain for ever a part of the most essential India—reassuring all those who still look forward to some dream of a world culture, a common synthesis of the hopes and aspirations of mankind in some far off Utopia. Here is a pledge of the spirit of man—a promise for the future on which the prophetic soul of the wide world may dream on things to come. The sympathetic reader, foreign or Indian, who can for a moment rise above the unfortunatè sins of politicians, the petty designs of selfish men on either side, and turn to the finer issue of a happier and sunnier day, will find in these specimens of Indo-English poetry—a sense of a beautiful and harmonious pattern of Culture, evolving through much that is confused, small and distracting.

Besides bringing together such varied elements from the different parts of this vast sub-continent, and the finest speculations of the west in art and science and philosophy, the poems in this anthology express in general, through various images and symbols, a deep and central sadness in the mind of the sensitive Indian. This sadness

abides mostly as an undertone. But now and then it intensifies to a keen lyrical anguish ; sometimes, it flames forth into a wild aspiration for a world far away from ours ; and, sometimes, it chastens and subdues itself into a quiet mystic brooding. Life in India today, in spite of all the obvious squalor, dirt and depression, is a poignant experience in itself ; it is the vale of soul-making. Elsewhere, in more fortunate lands, life may be gayer and sunnier, but nowhere else has the soul of a poet a more intense or agonising spectacle to contemplate. Down through the centuries, especially, during the last hundred years, India has been passing through strange and stirring vicissitudes. The history of India during all this period is the long and arduous story of a people with infinite patience, facing always a bleak and autumnal prospect, experiencing suffering, dark and obscure. In all this is material for the most saddening and at the same time the most bracing of all influences which a poet may receive on this side of the grave. The gladness or gaiety of song, such as we get in the heart of merrie England of the earlier centuries, is impossible here. The Elizabethan Renaissance gave birth to shouts of joy, songs of delight and search for adventure. The French Revolution resulted in thunder and lightning—unleashing forces both good and bad that have affected the external course of man's destiny. The modern Indian Renaissance is absolutely different from these two epoch-making events—in that it is essentially inward-working, serious, and spiritual. No wonder, Indo-English poetry reflects this characteristic feature. The poems collected here express the typical Indian sense of intense and brooding reflection—bordering on Virgilian sadness. Now and again, there are prophetic eyes that peer through the enveloping mist and see far and thrill to a distant carnival of the spirit on the other side of the hill—full of dance and song and sun-burnt mirth ! The voices of these poets brings us reassuring reports that all is not lost yet ; that these tedious times—made heavy and wearisome by the cruelty of man to man—will soon cease, and that the mission of Prometheus will be fulfilled ere long. It is such an idealistic emphasis that one finds in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo, J. Krishnamurti, Dilip Kumar Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, and Swami Vivekananda—an emphasis that not merely gives hint of a hopeful future but also calls the individual's attention towards a spiritually sustained effort for the realization of his cherished dreams.

But apart from these exceptional and uplifting voices, the others are voices of pain, their throats wracked with a deep despair and forbidden hopes profound. The characteristic tendency of modern poetry all over the world, after a period of aesthetic isolation in the ivory tower, is to reproduce the sweat of the masses, their constant,

unrewarded toil, and the deep and tragic significance of their suffering. Elsewhere, such a tendency often becomes blatantly propagandistic, partisan, sectarian, and the poems ring hollow artistically. But here, in India, the fact of human suffering and misery is so huge and oppressive that it will take more than a poet's imagination to comprehend it. Some of our poets have found here the source of a strong inspiration—identifying themselves with the people they sing of or portray. The significance of man's life is that man suffers; the significance of that suffering is the way he understands it, interprets it, and finds in the very depth of sorrow a strange and satisfying fulfilment. It is to this great endeavour—of glimpsing into the innermost recesses of reality, and seeking a meaning in all this blind and apparently chaotic destiny and its supreme indifference to the concerns of man,—that some of our poets have dedicated themselves. There is work here for the keenest and most penetrating vision, the deepest penance of thought and expression, the most agonising search for an expression adequate to this extraordinary vision. Never after the fall of the Roman Empire did the imagination of man have to grapple with a problem so huge and chaotic. It is a situation that may well-nigh benumb the mind were it not for the fact that the ancient wisdom of India, her faith in the final values of life, still sustains these poets. Through the bars of the prison—they are quick to see the stars shine undimmed, and they consider the lilies of the valley which toil not. There is need for comfort, for hope and encouragement, in this dark hour of India's history. And these poets, if they make us react more sorrowfully and sensitively to the blighting environment of our political and social life, its misery and meanness, at the same time reassure us that whatever happens there is another world of thought and spirit, for ever beyond the tyranny of men, and that through all our common suffering, it has still power to inspire, comfort and sustain.

Seen in its historical perspective, Indo-English poetry reveals three main stages in its growth and development. It is difficult to sum up in a single word or phrase these three stages, but for the sake of convenience they may be indicated by the words—Imitation, Indianization and Individualization. The period of imitation is the earliest when poets like Kashiprosad Ghose, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, and the contributors to the *Dutt Family Album* wrote verses entirely in imitation of English poets like Scott, Byron, Wordsworth and others. Kashiprosad's *Shair* (1830) is a clear imitation of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. *The Captive Ladie* (1894) of M. M. Dutt is, in spirit and metre, an imitation of Byron's verse-tales. Govind



Chunder Dutt's poems (1870) recall the quaint manner of some of the 17th century English poets. Sashi Chander Dutt's *The Warrior's Return* (1878) is strongly reminiscent of the patriotic poems of Thomas Campbell. Even when dealing with themes relating to Hindu festivals or Indian Deities, these poets wrote nothing but mechanical verses—failing to reproduce the rich atmosphere and suggestive tradition associated with them. The Indo-English poets of this period of imitation “appear to be at work in some strangely neutral zone of the imagination, and to be uninfluenced by the colour and atmosphere of their environment.” While the English and Anglo-Indian poets of this time who wrote on Indian themes deliberately sought to understand and interpret our point of view, the Indo-English poets felt contented with showing their newly acquired metrical and linguistic skill in an alien tongue. And in their unbounded enthusiasm for new-found treasures, they went to the extent of anglicizing even their ideas and imagery. All these early poets were enthusiastic and careful students of English language and literature under competent teachers who were themselves poets of considerable merit, and they were only eager to exhibit their mastery of language and literary craftsmanship. Mr. Dunn gives a just estimate of the work of these early imitative Indo-English poets : “It may well be asked what is the value of the poetry produced by the writers already named. That they were devoted disciples of the art of letters is clear enough ; but more than disciples they were not. To the students of Indian educational history their work must be of abiding interest ; but in the larger world of literature it can hold no distinctive place. The range of (their) poetry is limited in the extreme. Their subjects are found in the picturesque incidents of Indian history and legend, in the ritual of Hinduism, and at times in Christian theology and scriptures. At best these themes may be described as occasional, and their treatment is slight. The vast treasure-house of Indian history and tradition has been left unopened by these writers who avoided the extensive treatment of great and dignified subjects. The example of their own classical literature failed to produce the necessary stimulus to literary work on a large scale. It would be foolish to condemn these authors for what they did not attempt to accomplish ; but the charge of inadequacy may be pressed more closely in examining their treatment of such Indian themes as they chose to represent in their verse. Such poetry as they produced was Indian only in so far as it was written in Bengal and was the result of education received therein ; and it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that here its oriental character begins and ends. Even the

excellence of Michael Dutt lies chiefly in his ability to follow his metrical masters ; while most of his successors approach the history of their country as if they had no part in its heritage." It may be said, in conclusion, that though these early writers have not contributed anything of substantial value either to Indo-English poetry or to the literature of the Empire, they yet have their place as the pioneers in a new branch which has put forth many leaves and blossoms since their time. Their work illustrates " the successful study of a great literature and a difficult language," and is in the nature of a well and truly laid foundation for the beautiful edifice of Indo-English poetry.

The second stage—that of Indianization—begins with Toru Dutt—who may be rightly regarded as the founder of the modern school of Indo-English poetry. She differs from her predecessors in two ways—" in her European education received in England and France; and in her whole-hearted acceptance of oriental themes at the very time when by her talented application, she had forged for herself an instrument of expression from two difficult European languages." Toru Dutt could easily have written verses in imitation of English and French models, but she did not. She deliberately chose significant themes from Hindu legends and epics and wrote on Savitri, Lakshman, Dhruva, Prahlad and Sita. She is the first Indo-English singer of importance to interpret the heart of India, and to create the genuine Indian atmosphere in her poems. The premature close of her life, however, prevented her from giving greater emphasis and currency to the new vogue she started. That task fell to the lot of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. Her three volumes of poems deal almost entirely with Indian themes and are vibrant with typical Indian atmosphere. Endowed with a temperament which helps her to brave the rigours of harsh and grating reality with a smile on her face and a song on her lips—she imparts a romantic colouring to her verses. All the same, it is the authentic heart of India that she reveals. No one else among the Indo-English poets has sung of India with such glamour and grace, such passion and fluency, and such vigour and vitality as she has done. But, strangely enough, not Toru Dutt, not Sarojini Naidu, but another—a greater than the two, and again, strangely enough, not one who may be appropriately called an Indo-English poet,—it is who has vitally helped the Indianization of Indo-English poetry. In Rabindranath Tagore's poetry ancient Indian thought—the thought of the Vedas and the Upanishads and of the mediaeval singer-saints and the unsophisticated folk—took a rebirth. He reinterpreted the old in terms of the new, and helped us to behold new significances and fresh beau-

ties in what is commonly regarded as antique and out-of-date. The wealth of imagery, the richness of thought, the plenitude of symbolism, the simplicity of mysticism which he has introduced into his poetry has proved to be an abundant source of inspiration to almost all his contemporaries and successors. There are very few Indo-English poets of this century who have escaped Tagore's influence. Several have implicitly followed his thought and copied his symbolism and mysticism. Even at the present time, it may be no exaggeration to say that many fresh aspirants to fame as Indo-English poets begin their literary pilgrimage under the inspiring influence of Tagorean thought and Tagorean technique.

Coming to the third stage—that of Individualization—it is rather difficult to be specific. All good poets are individualistic. Each has his own particular outlook and particular utterance. So have the Indo-English poets. But in the case of some this individualization has resulted in a recognizable superior excellence. Many are the influences—Indian\* as well as international—that have moulded the minds of some of our Indo-English poets in recent years. But the influences are indistinguishable from one another, and it is impossible to say where one ends and the other begins. Out of the amalgam of these influences—some of our poets like Shahid Suhrawardy, Subho Tagore, P. R. Kaikini and Bharati Sarabhai have fashioned for themselves fascinating poetic individualities. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya—who is both conventional and unconventional—has a striking poetic individuality in the midst of all his surprising variety. The truth is that Indo-English poetry is passing through a period of intense individualization. It has turned inward and has been exploring realms which the earlier poets failed to enter. The individualization of these poets is not mere idiosyncrasy—but an intensely experienced personal realisation which is integrated to the wide world around. This individualization in its best aspect has reached its culminant point in the later poetry of Sri Aurobindo. Secluded far and away from the madding crowd of humanity, a world-loser and a world-forsaker, he yet writes poetry that is authentically a world-mover and world-shaker. Sri Aurobindo is not simply a poet of Yoga, but a scatterer of light. Without having any anfractuosity about it, his poetry is a type by itself—the poetry of the spirit that sustains, the poetry that strikes open the gold gateways of hidden thought itself. Born out of his long and deep personal experience of the seen and the unseen, the heard and the unheard, his poetry has a supreme spiritual stature and bears the stamp of the profound *mantric* utterance of our ancient *rishis*. Sri Aurobindo's poetry of individualization—and, be it

added, of ideal spiritual endeavour and experience—has influenced some of his devoted disciples. And I have a feeling that in the years to come—when his poetry in particular and thought in general come to be widely understood and appreciated, when men will turn in disgust from the fever and fret of life and yearn to hear the unheard music of the spirit and to behold the Rose of God—there may emerge many Indo-English poets who will seek their salvation through song under the unerring inspiration of the banner of his radiant thought.

Having said this, it must be made clear that these are not hard and fast distinctions or demarcations. Even today, among the ever-increasing band of Indo-English poets, there are all types of writers. There are those who write mostly imitative verses. There are others who, uninfluenced by any particular ideology, weave into pleasant patterns their own simple soul-stirrings. Yet some others out-modern the most modernist of English or continental poets. It is impossible—and, it is undesirable also—to pigeon-hole poets and poetry into this or that category. What matters it in what form or fashion they write—so long as their work is genuine poetry ? The best of Indo-English poetry is a feast for the spirit, a stimulant to thought, a spur to imagination, an invitation to revel in primal colours and vital symbols, to luxuriate in the intense voluptuousness of the light beyond darkness. It justifies itself by its strange beauty and newness of genius, by possessing in abundance all the essential poetic material and poetic media, by its penetrating psychological analysis or subtle psychical suggestion, and by its profound image-making faculty which helps it to harmonize heaven and earth with the symbolism of light and ecstasy everlasting. At times it is nerve of energy and strength of wing that are visible ; at other times, it is intellectual depth and intuitive suggestiveness that are supreme ; sometimes, it is the glow and beauty of romantic colour wonderfully stimulating and rich that strikes the eye ; at other times, it is rhetorical effectiveness, a harmonious and lucid turn of expression, or a robust vigour in the soul and spring of the rhythm that greets the ear ; anon, an austerity of power, majesty and sublimity—nourished on the ever-living influences of our classical thought and tradition—uplifts the spirit into the atmosphere of some high dawn of virgin purity. Indeed, the many facets of the best Indo-English poetry lend their admirer ampler flight into the realm where Truth, Goodness and Beauty tone into each other—and quiver out into the life-mood that hymns its own sight, emotion and exultation, the realm where the truth of existence and mystic experience blend into a bright significance that enlightens the eternal verities.

V. N. BHUSHAN



# I SRI AUROBINDO

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[He dwells apart—with his soul like a star—on the serene hill-tops of Thought—like his own Shiva, the Inconscient Creator! Aureoled in spirit-strength—he is a repository of God-effulgence—a beacon-light of the flame-trance of Life Divine. Outgrowing the mediocre meaning of man—he has evolved himself in to a seer with heaven-vision—into a *jivanmukta*—beholding the splendour refused to the earthward sight. In the light of this, the details of his early life and activities make strange reading—as if they were happenings in a different world. Yet they illustrate how it is possible for an individual to change himself completely—to change from an enthusiast of revolutionary spirit into a rapturous messenger of God. Born on 15th August 1872, Sri Aurobindo had all his early and higher education in England, failed in the I.C.S. examination, took a Tripos in the Classics from the King's College, Cambridge University, and returned to India in 1893. He worked for thirteen years, first as professor, and then as Vice-Principal, of the Baroda College, Baroda. At this time, the sensational Partition of Bengal stirred his patriotic sentiments, and he went to his home province to join the national movement. For sometime he worked as Principal of the National College, and then as editor of *Bandemataram*. He was arrested in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case in 1908, and was in jail for a year. It was at this time, in the Uttarapara prison-cell, that illumination came to him giving him a new vision of life. In 1910 he retired to Pondicherry and has been there since that time, shunning all outside contact, and pursuing his silent quest after the infinite. Not a recluse in the ordinarily understood sense of the word, he has only detached himself from mundane life in order to have more and more of life divine. To be a spiritual superman and help others to be such, to help humanity to regain its lost spiritual equilibrium and proceed from darkness to light—this has been the glorious endeavour of this envoy of Heavenly Thought, this ambassador of Illumined Passivity.

Sri Aurobindo's poetry is a type by itself—poetry of the highest and rarest kind—the poetry of mystic vision, magical word and *mantric* vibration. It is not simply poetry of the Yoga or the poetry of austerity revelling in recondite thought, reeling expression and serpentine movement. Born out of deep spiritual experience and self-realization, Sri Aurobindo's poetry is 'a call to spiritual adventure.' And this experience and realization being beyond the common, his poetry too wears a somewhat uncommon complexion—

especially to those uninitiated into the secrets of spiritual life. That is why Sri Aurobindo's poetry requires to be read, enjoyed and appreciated not according to the ordinary conventional standards of poetry, but differently—aesthetically, intuitively, spiritually. His poetic style and metrical experiments—especially in his later poems—are quite in keeping with his new thought, and are to a great extent necessitated by them. Conventional language and common epithets will not, simply, convey his thoughts and ideas. He has, therefore, forged new expressions, coined new phrases, invented new metres, and altogether changed poetic expression and technique—to serve his purpose best. Sri Aurobindo's words and phrases—with their rich suggestions and new significances—are ripened fruits of inner ecstasy, while his new-moulded metrical designs are the very accents of a super-normal soul-speech. His metrical experiments—especially in such poems as *The Bird of Fire*, *Jivanmukta*, *In Horis Aeternum*, and *The Rose of God*, coupled with his brilliant essay—*On Quantitative Metre*—are in the nature of a vital contribution to English Prosody. Sri Aurobindo's poetry is a luminous sea-mark on the coast of Time. To read it is a rich spiritual experience ; to understand and appreciate it is to rifle from life a few moments of rarefied rapture !]

## INVITATION

With wind and the weather beating round me  
Up to the hill and the moorland I go.  
Who will come with me ? Who will climb with me ?  
Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow ?

Not in the petty circle of cities  
Cramped by your doors and your walls I dwell ;  
Over me God is blue in the welkin,  
Against me the wind and storm rebel.

I sport with solitude here in my regions,  
Of misadventure have made me a friend.  
Who would live largely ? Who would live freely ?  
Here to the wind-swept uplands ascend.

I am the lord of tempest and mountain,  
I am the Spirit of freedom and pride.  
Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger  
Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.

## TRANSFORMATION

My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream ;  
It fills my members with a might divine :  
I have drunk the Infinite like a gaint's wine.  
Time is my drama or my pageant dream.  
Now are my illumined cells joy's flaming scheme  
And changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine  
Channels of rapture opal and hyaline  
For the influx of the Unknown and Supreme.

I am no more a vassal of the flesh,  
A slave to Nature and her leaden rule ;  
I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh.  
My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,  
My body is God's happy living tool,  
My spirit a vast sun of deathless light.

## REVELATION

Someone leaping from the rocks  
Past me ran with wind-blown locks  
Like a startled bright surmise  
Visible to mortal eyes,—  
Just a cheek of frightened rose  
That with sudden beauty glows,  
Just a footstep like the wind  
And a hurried glance behind,  
And then nothing,—as a thought  
Escapes the mind ere it is caught.  
Someone of the heavenly rout  
From behind the veil ran out.

## THE BIRD OF FIRE

Gold-white wings a throb in the vastness, the bird of flame went  
glimmering over a sunfire curve to the haze of the west,  
Skimming, a messenger sail, the sapphire-summer waste of a  
soundless wayless burning sea.  
Now in the eve of the waning world the colour and splendour  
returning drift through a blue-flicker air back to my breast,  
Flame and shimmer staining the rapture-white foam-vest of  
the waters of Eternity.



Gold-white wings of the miraculous bird of fire, late and slow  
have you come from the Timeless. Angel, here unto me  
Bringst thou for travelling earth a spirit silent and free or  
His crimson passion of love divine,—  
White-ray-jar of the spuming rose-red wine drawn from the vats  
brimming with light-blaze, the vats of ecstasy,  
Pressed by the sudden and violent feet of the Dancer in Time  
from his sun-grape fruit of a deathless vine ?

White-rose-altar the eternal Silence built, make now my nature  
wide, an intimate guest of His solitude,  
But golden above it the body of One in Her diamond sphere  
with Her halo of star-bloom and passion-ray !  
Rich and red is thy breast, O bird, like blood of a soul climbing  
the hard crag-teeth world, wounded and nude,  
A ruby of flame-petalled love in the silver-gold altar-vase  
of moon-edged night and rising day.

O Flame who art Time's last boon of the sacrifice, offering-flower  
held by the finite's gods to the Infinite,  
O marvel bird with the burning wings of light and the  
unbarred lids that look beyond all space,  
One strange leap of thy mystic stress breaking the barriers of mind  
and life, arrives at its luminous term thy flight ;  
Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire  
thou frontest eyes in a timeless Face.

## ROSE OF GOD

Rose of God, vermilion stain on the sapphires of heaven,  
Rose of Bliss, fire-sweet, seven-tinged with the ecstasies seven !  
Leap up in our heart of humanhood, O miracle, O flame,  
Passion-flower of the Nameless, bud of the mystical Name.

Rose of God, great wisdom-bloom on the summits of being,  
Rose of Light, immaculate core of the ultimate seeing !  
Live in the mind of our earthhood ; O golden Mystery, flower,  
Sun on the head of the Timeless, guest of the marvellous Hour.

Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,  
Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night!  
Ablaze in the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy plan,  
Image of Immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man.

Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,  
Rose of Life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre !  
Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical  
rhyme ;  
Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the  
children of Time.

Rose of God like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,  
Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace !  
Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's abyss :  
Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life Beatitude's kiss.

## 2. V. N. BHUSHAN

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[The distinguished editor of this distinguished anthology and the others to follow—what prefatory note does he need ? What matters it for others to know that he is an Andhra by birth—an accident which he himself has forgotten on account of the settled conviction that he is an Indian first and last ?—Or to know that he was born at Masulipatam on 16th July 1909—a fact which he himself does not wish to remember, for he believes that he is just as young or as old as he feels, as the moods of hope and despair grip him ?—Or to know that both as a student and as a Professor of English his connections extend to five universities, for he is of the opinion that all these are minor happenings which have but a temporary value ? With a physical personality that is strongly reminiscent of the late G. K. Chesterton, with a mental make-up that is as complex beneath as it is calm on the surface, with an enthusiasm for creative activity that often outruns his failing energy, with a lofty idealism that ever keeps its flag unfurled inspite of sieges and set-backs, with stern features but soft feelings—Prof. Bhushan is a difficult one to understand though an easy one to deal with ! Wedded to his literary work, he leads a life of splendid seclusion—believing that what matters most about any human being is not academic qualifications but cultural attainments. And in his case this is just the thing that matters. Well-known as a brilliant writer of stories and plays in his own language (Telugu), he has produced in English an amazing amount of work consisting of poems, plays, stories and essays in literary criticism. And the quality of his work is as praiseworthy as its quantity. In whatever he writes—there is the stamp of genuine inspiration, and he seems to write under a spell as it were—be it a poem or a paragraph. His poetry, especially,—that which has been published in seven sumptuous books—is the best creative activity of Prof. Bhushan and will live long—if the gods that confer literary immortality are not capricious ! That is what he himself sincerely believes—believes that he has written poetry that will live ; and you must hear *him* say this with a rising gusto ! If it is egoism, well, take it so, but remember that it is but an echo of what many that count, here and abroad, have said about his poetry. Tagore, Iqbal, Sarojini Naidu, Drinkwater, Galsworthy, Maurice Baring, Wilfrid Gibson, Sherard Vines, A. G. Gardiner, Edmund Blunden, Louis Cazamian, Louis Eilshemius, Bonamy Dobree, Philip Guedalla, Reni Galland, Ernest Rhys, Somerset Maugham, Jules Bloc, Kan Kikuchi—are among those who have read his poetry and written lines of high praise about it. Reviewing

a book of poems by Prof. Bhushan in *English* (magazine of the English Association, London) in 1939, Mr. Vivian de Sola Pinto observed : “ Mr. Bhushan is a lyrical poet with real vision and originality and he gives English poetic forms a new charm and freshness by adapting them to the expression of Indian imagination and mystical thought . . . Mr. Bhushan’s poetry opens up a new field of vision for the English mind, and deserves to be better known in Europe.” There you have it—rich and aristocratic poetry. Yes, Prof. Bhushan’s poetry is aristocratic—for it is full of treasures—dreams, hopes, visions, ecstasies, a devotion to something afar, winged words and wizard phrases. It is this intellectual and imaginative aristocracy of Prof. Bhushan that reflects itself frequently in his habits, moods, manners and contacts. And if others misunderstand him for this at times attributing to him cynicism, haughtiness, aloofness, egoism, well, let them. What do they gain—and what does he lose ! If dreaming is a sin, if the writing of poetry and that in English is a crime, and if attempting to translate dreams into deeds and to live poetry are unpardonable activities, well, he is guilty of all these, and let him have all the punishment he deserves from those self-constituted censors with jaundiced eyes, jealous tongues and carping pens ! But before they roll up their sleeves to do this—let them read his poems and pause and ponder—and if they are not still struck with wonder—they are then at liberty to impale him alive—for what he is and what he is not ! But, please, give him breath till he finishes the self-chosen task of editing all the anthologies planned ! . . . And, pray, do not ask—‘ who has written these lines ? ’]

## DIWALI

The dying sunset in all its golden opulence dies  
As the wearisome winter Dusk lets loose its shades  
And paves the way for the bell-less feet of Night  
Who flashes her black breath across the world.

The treacherous Darkness hoists her banners of black—  
Scarce suspecting the light coloured attack  
From rows on rows of little laughing lamps—  
Lit by millions of Diwali-enchanted women and men.

Night comes swiftly on with her arrows of gloom  
But reels back in wonder and pale with fear—  
As she beholds the unique spectacle of flames  
Twinkling from rows on rows of earthen lamps.

Ah, Diwali has come—the festival of lamps and laughs,  
When even the lampless and laughless homes  
Fashion of their luckless lives and loves a dream  
To offer at the feet of Lakshmi as she passes by.

Ah, Diwali has come—with all its wealth of light !  
Light your lamps—you men and women—  
And you, too, children dear, light your lamps  
And blaze the path that is yours in life !

The little earthen lamps that all of us light  
Are symphonies of Faith to the Eternal Light,  
Coloured prayers to the bountiful mercy of God  
That vouchsafes us rare hours of radiance !

Pain and Penury forget their habitual gloom—  
And Pleasure and Plenty redouble their usual bloom—  
As at Diwali time the little oil lamps gleam and glow  
Making lustrous the momentary world of man !

### “ S O - H A M ”

My pilgrimage shall be a scented flame on earth  
To kindle the beacon-fires of Goodness, Beauty and Truth—  
My dreams and deeds like a pure-pulsed song  
Shall echo through the corridors of Time for long !

Insulated from faults and fetters, and snares and sins,  
And the terrene meshes that drag man to dismal depths—  
My love-fringed life shall be a symbol of immensity,  
A trophy of triumphal light and a lyre of liberty !

My life shall never be as barren as death,  
But full with the hues and harmonies of morning breath—  
A sanguine-hearted venture into higher spheres  
To reap a harvest of stars in heaven's meadows !

Burns through me the inextinguishable fire of faith,  
Faith in myself and my star-impelled destiny—  
And in me is the essence of the heritage of all mankind,  
The unheard melody, the hidden beauty and the burning hope !

My sun-kissed spirit is stronger far than my flesh,  
O, no slave am I to the senses' leaden clutch—  
My soul leaps like wonder into wide limitless skies,  
And my body is a proscenium for deathless delight !

•  
O, I shall a shaper be of my times and tendencies,  
Of darling dreams and daring deeds—  
And may be alone, but undaunted, I shall the charioteer be  
Of the *Juggernaut* car of vital spirit and vernal song !

## DREAM, MORTALS . . .

Dream, mortals, dream for a little while,  
In dream at least grow divine and clear the golden stile !

What seekest thou with empty hands and empty eyes  
In the pale, shadowy paths of the earth,  
And groan in perpetual pain of something unattained ?

Step out, mortals, step out of your dark alleys of sense—  
Leave for once the tortuous languid avenues of lust  
That deny thee freedom from the shackles of the dust . . .

•  
Rise, mortals, rise into the high domain of dreams—  
Forgetting the pain, the poverty, the sin and the sorrow  
Of the dusk-dim flicker of mortal life . . .

Grow rich with fancies that fly, and thoughts that stir,  
Breathe the rapturous fragrance of the heaven's calm,  
And behold a radiant revelation welcome thee . . .

Tear, mortals, tear the trammels, and in dream at least  
Reach the skies that your restless spirit forever craves,—  
Attain the world that the flag of your vision unfurls !

Dream, mortals, dream, dream for a little while,  
And in dream at least grow divine, and clear the golden stile !

## THE LIGHT BEYOND

There is a light beyond Darkness....

A Light

Denied to the earth-encrusted gaze....

A Light

That is the laughter-echo of the King of Kings

As he treads the realm of Darkness

With silent...shining footfall!

The Darkness-realm, on either side,

Is fringed with cataracts of light;

It's not darkness absolute . . . unrelumed,

But the jewelled step leading to the Light Beyond,

The tasselled veil hiding the Light Beyond . . .

Ah, the Light Beyond . . . the Light,

A masquerade of sunlight splendour....

A flaring beacon-fire

On the coast of the unchartered sea,

A mystic music-note

From shells forsaken on the other shore!

The heralds of silence in the Darkness-realm

Look beyond on the Light

That is the language of the gods at play,

And acquire the power to behold in full

The flame-flower of Ecstasy....the Vision Beautiful!

In the luminous vast of the Light Beyond,

The voice of the voiceless One forever throbs—

Working into a strange waking mood

The inexhaustible rapture of the soul!

The Light Beyond . . . . The Light of Lights—

The firm foot-hold of the God of Gods—

The paradise of a new creative plane

Where the secrets of the flaming heart of things

Are revealed to the spirit upreared

In the illumined passivity of life-divine!

## 3

## BUDDHADEVA BOSE

[One of the most prominent and prolific of the younger generation of Bengali writers, Mr. Buddhadeva Bose has made a name for himself which may well be the envy of much older writers. Born in Comilla (Bengal) on 30th November 1908, he was educated at the Dacca Collegiate School and the Dacca University. He passed the M.A. Examination (in English literature)—standing First in First class. He is serving now as lecturer in English in one of the Calcutta Colleges, but regards literature as his main occupation, and rightly too ! For he made up his mind to pursue a literary career from his earlier days. And it was while a student that he founded and edited a literary monthly by name *Pragati*. He was also connected at that time with *Kallol* of Calcutta, a magazine which marked a new era in Bengali literature. Later, for two years, he was, along with Prof. Humayun Kabir, the joint editor of *Chaturanga*. He is now the founder-editor of *Kavita*—a journal devoted entirely to modern poetry and serious criticism. More than that, he is the founder-director of a live organization—“Kavitabhavan”—a cultural institution which publishes modern literature, produces modern plays, arranges literary meetings, musical soirees and several other such functions. It was under the auspices of this institution that Mr. Bose’s three-act Bengali play—*Maya Malancha* (The Garden of Maya)—an adaptation from his novel *Kalo Hawa*—was put on boards at the Srirangam Theatre, Calcutta, early in March of this year. The performance was directed by the author himself, and the cast consisted entirely of literary persons and society ladies connected with “Kavitabhavan.” Mr. Bose’s aim in producing this contemporary social play is “to present a literary drama before our public, and thus bridge the gulf between literature and the theatre which so unfortunately exists in present-day Bengal.”

Mr. Buddhadeva Bose’s literary activity has been extensive—including, as it does, poetry, fiction, plays, critical essays, personal sketches, travel books and books for children. His published works number more than sixty !—too numerous to be catalogued here. Mention may, however, be made of *Bandir Bandana* (poems, 1930), *Kankavati* (poems, 1936), *Damayanti* (poems, 1943), *Jadin Phutlo Kamal* (novel, 1933), *Kalo Hawa* (novel, 1942), *Rekhachitra* (short stories, 1931), *Pheriwalla* (short stories, 1940). Mr. Buddhadeva Bose does not write verses in English these days. He used to do so some years ago, and some of them were published in such journals as *The Orient*, *Triveni*, and *Poetry* (London). “At one time,” he



says in a letter to the present writer, "I was rash enough to write original verses in English—but that is a phase long over, and I do not wish either to resume or recall it." Mr. Bose, however, has himself translated a number of his Bengali poems into English, and three of them are included here. His poems bear the stamp of an individuality alive to the moods of life and nature. His reactions to his real and imaginative experiences are his own, and his manner of expression his own. The first poem, for instance, is written after the manner of Hilaire Belloc's *Tarantella* ; but how vastly different it is with its peculiar sound and colour ! Suggestion, the essence of all great poetry, is the hall-mark of Mr. Bose's poetical work. He is a writer with rare talent and is bound to make a lasting name for himself in the future.]

### **'DO YOU REMEMBER AN INN, MIRANDA?'**

Surangama, do you remember that little room ?

The blue sky poured in at the window, and the stormy wind blew to the swing of the sea.

Do you remember ?

The sea, dancing with its million waves, opened out from horizon to horizon,

And the little room grew delirious with the shouting and shattering of the waves.

Do you remember ?

Ah, we were clamorous, we were drunken with each other.

We were the storm that filled the horizons.

Many a time did the broken moon return to us, sawing the black sky with light, and scattering the crowd of stars,

And often on narrow nights did the moon creep stealthily up the sky, drawing up the sea in a flood-tide, and in a blind surge of blood-tide drowning us,

Do you remember, Surangama, do you remember ?

We were torn by the arrows of a hundred insolent suns,

And a hundred days we blotted out with kisses,

And gaily we killed the infant light at dawn

In that little tumultuous room, do you remember ?

We had the swing of the sea in our blood when, at the end of night, we brought the dead moon back to life ;

We had the steps of the storm in our heart-beat when, gaily, we killed the savage infant suns ;

We were swept away in a blind with fathomless flood of kisses,

Do you remember, Surangama, do you remember ?

—From *Damayanti*

## A THOUGHT IN AUTUMN

The gleams and glances of autumn cannot make me happy, I am so heavily in debt.

Soon dark July will melt into bright gold,  
And the torn bedraggled clouds will be burnished white,  
As the flood of marvellous rain-washed blue sweeps the sky  
from end to end.  
And yet my heart is full of care.

O the intoxication of radiance dallying with the rain !  
O the glory of dark clouds mingling with the ripples of blue and gold !

How shall my soiled life bear such joy ?  
I am sunk deep in debt, but I will not remain debtor to you,  
O Autumn,

I will pay you back in songs.  
For, look, the wild vagrant songs of my tattered heart are  
bursting the bonds of sorrow—  
They, too, will melt in the blue and glow with the gold.

—From *Ek Payshay Ekti*

## SUDDEN SOUTH WIND

A sudden south wind was tumbled into mid-winter,  
And from strange dreams I wake up at dawn,  
And all the night a sad sweet breeze blows through my sleep.

Many are the marble stairs in the hall of dreams  
With hundreds of white feet moving up and down ;  
Dazzling thighs are revealed in blinding lightning flash,  
And I wake up at dawn in a tumult of pain.

Sad sweet thoughts are wafted through my dreams  
All the night, like the spring-tide loosened on the thoroughfares  
of sleep ;  
Unleashed Imagination, eddying in the wind,  
Lacerates my heart all night ;  
And a breeze of kisses blows into my dreams,  
And I wake up at dawn in an ecstasy of pain.

—From *Kankavati*

## 4. ASHU CHATTOPADHAY

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[A representative of the rising generation of Bengali writers, Mr. Chattopadhyay was born at Calcutta in 1908. A student of the Scottish Churches College, he graduated from the Calcutta University in 1928. He started his literary career even as a student by contributing poems and articles to journals like *Vichitra*, *Archana*, and *Panchapuspa*. In 1931 he was for sometime sub-editor of *Anjali*—a monthly magazine. He joined in 1933 the progressive group of writers under the auspices of the monthly journal—*Bhabiswat*, and became one of its regular contributors. From 1935 to 1938 he owned and edited the progressive weekly journal—*Aragati*. But with all this background, Mr. Chattopadhyay is not a mere journalist. He is essentially a man-of-letters with a modern and cosmopolitan outlook. Among his important published works may be mentioned—four novels *Dhara Choyar Bairay* (*Beyond Reach*, 1936), *Bhalo nay, Manda nay* (*Neither Good nor Bad*, 1938), *Choto Akas* (*Limited Sky*, 1940), *Sreshta Din-Guli* (*Best days*, 1943),—two volumes of short-stories—*Swami Nai Bari* (*The Husband is Away*, 1939), *Ekti Sakal* (*One Morning*, 1941),—and one collection of poems—*Premar Kabita* (*Love Poems*, 1941). Mr. Chattopadhyay has published many poems in English, but these have not yet been brought out in book form. His poetry represents one of the important aspects of modern Bengali poetic temper. Writing with grace and vigour, he gives a characteristically new interpretation to old themes.]

### FLEETING MOMENTS

Useless moments are slipping away—  
Ghosts of things that might have been !  
Stay with your tresses their straying feet,  
Lure them with your softest glance.

Sulkily we sit each detached from the other,  
The best part of night is hopelessly gone ;  
Let us make the best of what is left  
And face the breaking of roseate dawn.

The mysterious night urges us on—  
The stars of the firmament wink consent,  
Our blood is insistent and pounds at the heart,  
Let us crash through the door of shy restraint.

## THE REFUSAL

Bang—close the door right in my face  
With a force that is born of cold disdain,  
I smile, for I know the cause of this hate—  
The desire frustrated by shy restraint.

I know, in the morning you'll fall on your knees  
And beg forgiveness for all that has happened.  
Your fault is forgiven in advance, but my dear,  
How shall you account for the night that is gone ?

For the embalmed darkness made dreary and lone,  
For the star-kissed perfume of unenjoyed flowers,  
For the unknown ecstasy that might have been ours,  
For the cravings of our hearts that went unheeded ?

## 5. HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

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[Can you grasp the rainbow with your hands, nestle near the cloud, reach the sky, ride the wave, analyse the beauty of the flower ? If you can do all these, and not any one only, why, then, you understand and appreciate ' Harin '—the man and the poet ! Unquestionably the most prominent and prolific of living Indo-English writers, his amazing versatality defies analysis. He is a poet, a playwright, a musician, an actor, a socialist, a rebel, a wayfarer. Born on 2nd April 1898 in Hyderabad (Deccan), he is barely forty-five, and yet has achieved an international reputation which others may envy but will never get. Having started writing verses in English at the age of eight, he published his first book of poems—*The Feast of Youth*—in his twentieth year, and has continued writing poetry of pure gold till today, in addition to dozens of verse-plays and prose dramas. His published works alone run into several volumes, and if rumours are not wrong, he has many manuscripts ready for the press. Such consistent literary activity of such consistently high quality is not given to average mortals !

Harindranath is not an average mortal ; he has something extraordinary about him. If you write to him, he will not reply ; if you ask him to compose poems, he will not ; if you ask him to publish his unpublished works, he will not consent ; if you invite him to deliver a lecture or give a recitation of his poems, he will not accept it ; if you befriend him, he may not remember you after sometime. All these, however, he does of his own accord—when the mood is on him. When in Cambridge he was exempted from a degree (which, fortunately, he has not !) on the merits of his manuscripts of *The Perfume of Earth* and *The Magic Tree*, and allowed to work for the Ph.D. degree of that university, he cared not to avail himself of the opportunity. When a College in Ceylon offered him a Professorship of English—in spite of his having no academic hall-marks—he demurely rejected it. He writes poems of an idealistic nature—forgetting the pain and penury around. He writes poems suffused with mysticism—lending a farness to the reader's vision. And he writes fiery poems too, poems on realistic and revolutionary themes—which draw blood from even stones ! He has travelled extensively—both in India and abroad. Three times (in 1918, 1927 and 1929) he has gone out of this country to different lands—lecturing, reciting, acting, and gaining experience of men and movements. Invited by the Soviet Union in 1928 for the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Russian Revolution,

he was there for a considerable period and studied stage-craft under masters like Meyerholdt. All these experiences have gone to the making of Harindranath's intellectual equipment. They have given him an astounding strength of mind and a daring imaginative reach.

Harindranath is a typical poet, and when that is said, all else about him is said. Friends may complain of his waywardness, his uncertainty, his whims and caprices, and his chameleon-like changes. Stories may be told about this or that aspect of his life, this or that activity of his, this or that side of his nature. Those who indulge in such things do not understand him aright. Even those who think that he will work wonders if only he is less Bohemian and more steady—miss the essential characteristic of his personality. No, 'Harin' should not be measured by the conventional yardstick of success in life ! He is all by himself—something of a phenomenon ! I for one would not wish him to be any other than what he is. If you change him, you may have the man in the worldly sense of the word, but you will surely miss the artist in him. What does it matter—how he lives, or where he wanders, or what he does ? Let him keep the poet in him alive—and he and we will be all the richer for that ! That Sri Aurobindo praised the genius, power and newness of Harin's verses, that Rabindranath Tagore felt marvelled while reading his poetry, that A. E., Alice Meynell, Laurence Binyon, Padraic Colum, W. B. Yeats, Harold Childe and Fowler-Wright have lavished glowing praise on him—these are matters of minor detail now. Harindranath has outgrown the stage of standing in need of others' compliments. His poetry carries with it its own justification and recommendation. He is the voice of India's song-destiny, and one day, when many others of his kind are forgotten, he will still be remembered as the high-peer of Shelley, the sun-treader !]

## NOON

The noon a mystic dog with paws of fire  
Runs through the sky in ecstasy of drouth  
Licking the earth with tongue of golden flame  
Set in a burning mouth.

It floods the forest with loud barks of light  
And chases its own shadows on the plains.  
Its Master silently hath set it free  
Awhile from silver chains.

At last towards the cinctured end of day  
It drinks cool draughts from sunset-mellowed rills,  
Then chained to twilight by the Master's hand  
It sleeps among the hills.

## THE EARTHEN GOBLET

O silent goblet red from head to heel,  
How did you feel  
When you were being twirled  
Upon the Potter's wheel  
Before the Potter gave you to the world ?

"I felt a conscious impulse in my clay  
To break away  
From the great Potter's hand that burned so warm,  
I felt a vast  
Feeling of sorrow to be cast  
Into my present form.

Before that fatal hour  
That saw me captive on the Potter's wheel  
And cast into this crimson goblet-sleep,  
I used to feel  
The fragrant friendship of a little flower  
Whose root was in my bosom buried deep.

The Potter has drawn out the living breath of me  
And given me a form which is the death of me ;  
My past unshapely natural state was best  
With just one flower flaming through my breast."

## CONTRARIES

I who am Maker of Beauty  
Have thought it more or less  
My strange celestial duty  
To fashion ugliness ;  
For I move upon my endless  
Travel through contraries  
And would, indeed, be friendless  
Rejecting either of these.

My mystery ever encloses  
Black nights with silver morns :  
How could I have made the roses  
If I hadn't conceived of thorns ?  
How could I have written my story  
Through all these aeons of years,  
If I hadn't wed sorrow to glory,  
Bright laughter to sullen tears ?

I, the Creator of Wonder,  
Have thought it both wise and right  
To marry the silence to thunder,  
Grey shadow to virgin light ;  
Union to separation,  
Blue heaven to dark brown earth,  
Extinction to all creation,  
And death to every birth.

I have wedded the wind to the taper,  
The naked sun to the rain ;  
I, the Ineffable Shaper,  
Have garlanded joy with pain.  
My Power shall you never unravel  
Nor take my secret to bits ;  
Be content that I always travel  
Through glaring opposites.

## A CALL TO POETS

To the little one-stringed lyre  
We must sing no longer  
For our throats are now on fire  
And our voice grows stronger ;  
Now shall our tones ring out combined  
New power in their ringing :  
Poets ! We must leave behind  
All the old selfish singing.



Our feet shall learn to walk above  
The ways of little passion,  
Out of another grief and love  
Great music we shall fashion.  
The grief of human hearts that break,  
The love of liberation :  
Poets who sleep as yet, awake !  
Turn weapons of the nation !

The lives of millions burn and bleed  
And millions starve and linger :  
Along with bread and hope they need  
Each bold and daring singer  
Whose songs shall give them strength to stand  
Through fiery tests which face them :  
Poets ! extend to them your hand  
And with deep pride embrace them.

Now gaze around and overhead  
The earth is full of battle,  
The sunset wears a battle-red  
While men are slain like cattle !  
The bombs of foes are reigning from  
The heavens, God's own dwelling !  
Poets ! make every song a bomb  
Triumph-endowed and telling !

A song can be a mighty thing  
And make the sword a coward ;  
When poets of the people sing  
Triumph is redly-flowered.  
From every breast that once was struck  
With helpless moan and sorrow  
A people's poet knows to pluck  
The triumph of to-morrow !  
A poet's singing is a flame,  
No sword was forged better !  
His songs of liberty can shame  
The tyrant's iron fetter.

A poet wields a mighty power,  
The nation cannot lose it :  
Poets ! behold your singing-hour  
Has come and you must use it.

## NOONTIDE OF SOULS

Floated noontides of spirit-austerities nakedly  
burning on every side,  
While I stand like a straight tall tree in the centre  
of Time, a desert bare,  
High up, suspended, the full sun seems an image of One  
who is golden-eyed,  
With shimmering beams for arrowy lashes which pierce  
like liquid points through the air.

Colour is swallowed up in the light that is golden-  
white and intensely still,  
And nothing in sight for miles and miles to shed  
a cooling shadow around,—  
All is as naked and all-incorruptible, steady and wondrous  
wide like His Will,  
And the desert-stretches flow on like a music  
of fiery gold with but light for sound.

Far away and beyond its fringes where the sunset tinges  
the sky with red,  
Or the white moon drops like a single rose from the  
slender stem of the fading night,  
There is a spot that the pilgrim seeks, where the  
caravan rests, and the camel's tread  
Is washed in rose-cool waters of dawn,  
and the last prayer heard in the quiet light.

I stand like a tall straight viewless tree in the centre  
of Time, a quivering waste  
Of desert-austerity under the stars that climb the  
horizon, chilly and weird,  
But I am in love with the desert-sky which is  
deeply alone and poignant and chaste,  
Where, either at noon or night, I am conscious of  
a deep full glow which no cloud has bleared.

Floated noontides quiver and pulse around me, each  
like a river that runs  
From end to end of His consciousness which in  
fullest tide is eternally rolled, .  
On the crest of each wave which dances and goes  
is the multiplied dance of a myriad suns  
That are fieriest silver within a trance that has  
lost itself in the fieriest gold.

## 6. GOVIND KRISHNA CHETTUR

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[The late Principal G. K. Chettur was a striking personality in the educational circles of the Madras Presidency. Endowed with an attractive figure, artistic tastes, amiable disposition and sparkling intellect, he won a quick reputation both as a scholar and as a poet. Born in 1898, he received his education from the Christian College, Madras, and took a high First Class degree. Later, he took the B.A. degree in History from the Oxford University. While here, he mixed freely and intimately with a very distinguished literary group which included W. B. Yeats, Arthur Symons, Robert Bridges, John Masefield and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. It was in this company that he sharpened to brightness his poetic talent. On his return to India, he was taken up in the Indian Educational Service in 1921 and was posted to the Government College, Mangalore, as Principal, where he served till his untimely death in 1936. The late Principal Chettur published some prose works such as—*The Last Enchantment*, *The Ghost City* and *Altars of Silence*. But it is as a poet that he has greater worth, and it is as such that he should be remembered. The five volumes of splendid verse that he has published are a treasure-house of permanent beauty and joy. The sonnet is his strong point, but his skill in other lyrical forms is no less perfect. Many and varied are his themes, but Death is his favourite one. Prophetically, it seems now, he mused sweetly on Death—even as Keats did. And death, to him, is a revealer, not a leveller ! But on whatever theme he writes, he infuses into his poetry—warmth, vision, colour and sound. His poetry has imaginative reach, deep feeling, and solemn melody.]

### SONNET XVIII

Thou hast been busy Death, as ne'er before :  
Too busy : one by one, betrayed by thee,  
They that we loved have stumbled through thy door  
And paid the debt of their mortality.  
So on their stalks the lovely blossoms fade,  
Or shaken by rude breezes flutter and fall,  
And one with the dust the beauty that they made  
Goes into nothingness beyond recall :

But not to nothingness do ye depart,  
But where we shall be proud to come when Fate  
Has cast our reckoning. O cowardly Heart,  
Death shall in no wise make us desolate,  
And by this thought shall we be comforted,  
The dead shall know how to receive the dead.

—From *The Shadow of God*

### SONNET XIX

To a far country that we know not of,  
Death leads us swiftly, surely, and we go  
Alike from those we hate and those we love,  
From present joy or old remembered woe.  
Alas, it matters not who goes before,  
They that are left behind must hasten after.  
Death laughs at those who talk of nevermore,  
And turn to windy sighs the gift of laughter.  
O foolish heart, be glad, therefore, and strong ;  
Grief mocks at life : Grief does not understand :  
The dead shall welcome thee with rapturous song,  
They watch thy shadowy progress to their land.  
Too brief thy time for sorrow or for strife,  
He that would conquer Death must conquer life.

—From *The Shadow of God*

### BLACK - LEAD

Made of what wood,  
How shaped, how perfected,  
Nor from what mines the lead,  
I have not lore to tell ;  
This only know I well,  
That as I write,  
Labouring day and night  
With thoughts elate,  
This whiteness delicate  
Loseth its lustre, and is dimmed and soiled ;  
And all my thoughts wherewith I toiled,  
Scrawled, scored, and under-scored,  
A piteous hoard  
Of vain imaginings . . . .

Yet, even so, I thought,  
Are we that labour here  
Through strange unlovely days,  
And difficult hard ways,  
God handling us to some all-glorious end ;  
And when we faint or fall,  
Or wandering, stray beyond recall,  
As I, even I, erase  
The toil of days,  
Setting to work once more,  
So will He wipe our score  
Of sin away, and graciously  
Begin anew upon this Mystery.

[“ Even amongst members of the Indian Civil Service one comes across, now and then, an indomitable Indo-Anglian, who ties his neck-tie askew, and hides a verse or two between files ”—so wrote sarcastically an anonymous nonentity in *The Hindustan Times* (Delhi) for January 16, 1939. Let him read the poems—at least the few included here—of Mr. S. K. Chettur, M.A., I.C.S., and rub his eyes with wonder ! Mr. Chettur does not belong to the category of what the anonymous writer calls “ parasitic Indo-Anglian poets.” He is a genuine poet of very real worth who has managed to keep his literary interest alive and active inspite of the official routine in which he has been engaged. Mr. Chettur is quite widely known as a writer of fiction, and has published two volumes of short-stories (*Muffled Drums*, 1927), (*The Cobras of Dharmashevi*, 1937) and one novel (*Bombay Murder*, 1940). But few know him as a poet—who has written and published some very excellent verses. No collected edition of these has yet been published. But the present writer who had read Mr. Chettur’s stray poems now and then, felt that he is well worthy to be represented in this Anthology. And it is at his persuasion that Mr. Chettur has agreed to be included here. A younger brother of the late Principal Chettur, S.K.C. was born in 1905. He was a student of the Christian and Presidency Colleges, Madras, and the University College, Oxford. After that, he competed for the Indian Civil Service Examination in England. He joined the Service in 1929, and is at present Collector and District Magistrate, Cuddapah (Madras Presidency)

Mr. Chettur developed his literary taste even while a student. He used to give public recitations of pieces from Shakespeare, do some mono-acting, and contribute articles, stories and poems to newspapers and magazines. S.K.C.’s published poems are not many, but they are enough to reveal the variety of his themes, the skill of his technique, the felicity of his expression, and the keenness of his perception. His two long poems—*The Trump of Doom* and *A Song of Service* show his capacity for sustained lyrical effort and for quickening thought. The three poems included here exhibit Mr. Chettur’s exquisite craftsmanship in smaller lyrics. They also show what fine poetic vision is his—beholding in common objects of existence significances that thrill the spirit of man. Should he care to collect his poems in a volume and continue writing more poems of this kind, I have no doubt that he will have his place of pride on the Indian Parnassus !]

## RED LOTUS

Red Lotus in the pool,  
    Standing immaculate,  
Sedate and beautiful,  
    Out of what starry fate  
Did mud and weeds and slush like this  
Give rise to thy transcendent bliss ?

O beauty in the slush,  
    O hidden loveliness  
Uprising with a rush  
    To hurl thy crimson kiss  
Of petals sweet upon the world,—  
What loss is ours when they are furl'd !

Beauty ephemeral,  
    Touching the spirit's wing,  
Is but a tale to tell,  
    Is but a song to sing,  
• And lotuses shall flare and fade  
And none will know when born, when dead.

Red Lotus in the pool,  
    Standing inviolate,  
O lay thy petals cool  
    Upon the spears of hate,  
And let thy travail from the mud  
Repeal the lust of men for blood . . .

## CONQUEST

Weighing Existence in the scales of Chance,  
Beneath the tree I saw the shattered seed  
That gave it birth ; and drunken with the creed  
Which measures Life by crowded Circumstance,  
I found my footsteps weary with the dance  
Of minutes and the sorrows that they feed,  
Remembering not one God-lived throe may plead  
As comfort for a million years of trance . . .  
Arise, my Soul, thy wings are fully grown !



Reach forth thy arms of longing, win the gold  
Which every passing moment doth enfold  
Within the nugget of the dim Unknown. . . .  
What though thy hands are bleeding ? Keep thy hold,  
And God's great Secret is thy very own.

## THE GLOW - WORM

Knowing the pain of this perpetual shade  
Which deepens with the onward-bearing years  
I strive to build within a mist of tears  
The glories of my inmost Self betrayed  
Upon the soundless dark. All undismayed,  
A soul enwrought with voiceless gloom appears,  
Rending the darkness with unceasing spears  
Hurl'd on a vague, illusive palisade . . .

Beyond my barrier'd sins I may not send  
My soul. But is the Grace shut out from sight  
That the lost soul, centred within its light,  
A glow-worm spark, alone, may comprehend  
Its God-lent beauty in a God-sent Night ?  
Who knows where Light begins, where shadows end ?

## 8. SHYAM SUNDAR LAL CHORDIA

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[His poetic reputation was well and truly laid long ago when the late Sir Edmund Gosse wrote to him : “ I have read your sonnets with much admiration. Their flowing language and rich Indian imagery are expressed with an accuracy and a felicity extremely remarkable in one not born to use the English language.” It was further strengthened when *The Times Literary Supplement*, London, complimented him on his “ admirably lucid English ” and on his possessing “ a sensitive and expressive personality that can thrill to the beauty of love and wisdom. . . ” And Prof. Chordia has every reason to feel legitimately proud of such praise. Born in 1898 in the Rajput State of Udaipur, he had his early education in that place. His B.A. Degree he took in 1920 from the Muir Central College, Allahabad, and the M.A. in English literature from the Allahabad University—topping the list of successful candidates in 1922. For a year he served as lecturer in English at the Maharana’s Intermediate College, Udaipur, and in July 1923 was taken in the Educational Service of the Central Provinces. Till recently he was Professor of English, Morris College, Nagpur, and is now working in the same capacity at the Robertson College, Jubbulpore. He is also a member of the Board of Studies in English, the Board of Studies in Commerce, the Faculty of Arts, and for some time, of the Court of the Nagpur University. Besides his two published volumes of poems and one volume of stories (*Divine Indifference and Other Stories*) he has contributed several poems, stories and essays to different periodicals.

Born in the picturesque State of Udaipur, far-famed for its natural beauty and for its being the stronghold of ancient Rajput traditions and chivalry, Prof. Chordia was deeply influenced in his early days by Nature and History, by hills and lakes, heroes and devotees, saints and singers. All this has found a beautiful artistic reflection in his poetry. He sings mostly of the splendour that was Rajasthan—and thrills the readers with robust raptures and romantic longings. But this is not the only aspect of Prof. Chordia’s poetry. Several are the poems in which he presents himself—his sensitiveness, his moods, his reactions, his aspirations. In all these he exhibits his essential poetic personality—which is of a highly individualistic nature. And, too, it must be remembered that he possesses an enviable technical skill. Whether it is the rhymed couplet, or narrative verse, or the sonnet, or lyric measures—he is

equally proficient. His merit in handling the sonnet deserves special praise, for within this 'narrow plot of ground' he has achieved success of which any well-known English poet may be proud. Happily, he combines this technical perfection with a rich poetic quality. Whether he interprets himself in his poetry or interprets the spirit and soul of India, Prof. Chordia is essentially a poet—a poet who sings because he must !]

## WE ARE BLIND

Deep gloom enfolds our dreaming souls for want of light,  
Brother : much have we lost for we have lost our sight !  
What of this blindness cast upon us ? Is it fair ?  
Does it spell peace or find we faith in Godhead there ?  
Denied of vision, brother, life is as the bow  
Shorn of its splendid, myriad-coloured magic glow.  
The sun-rise, moon-rise, and the glorious stellar space  
But they have no delight for us flung from His Grace,  
How beautiful, O God, is all this lovely world ?  
But not for us the charm of flowers, or dew empearled ;  
Nature's book is sealed to us, blind folk, and printed page  
Casts no enchantment on our souls, God, as we gaze  
In space, and scan life's never-ending sunless ways.  
Deep gloom enfolds our dreaming souls for want of light,  
Brother : much have we lost for we have lost our sight.

"God builds the nest of the blind bird," is it not said ?  
Will He not guide you right through death, doom and dread ?  
Homer, the lord of language, in life's mazy ways.  
With darkened vision, wandered long in ancient days,  
Chanting, in perfect speech, of courage deep in man,  
To triumph over resistless fate within his measured span.  
Amid the hyacinth gardens by a soft blue sea,  
Immortal Sappho voiced her rapturous gloom and glee,  
Till love of Phaon burnt her heart, quenched her eyes,  
And then she sang no more : thus ended her high emprise.  
Milton, the supreme master of the Epic song,  
Touched not his harp for years to quell his country's wrong,  
Was of yore. In the deepest dark before the dawn  
He faltered not, nor feared, then light to him was shown.  
Soordas, the passion-shattered bard, bereft of light,  
Lived in realms of silence, groping in the night,

Soul's night, till God in sweet compassion lit a star  
In heaven, and made his darkness radiant from afar.  
Blind we are, no, not they, who kindled dreams divine,  
With midnight in their hearts, and beauty, brother mine.  
"God builds the nest of the blind bird," is it not said ?  
Will He not guide you right through death, doom and dread ?

Deep gloom enfolds our dreaming souls for want of light,  
Brother : much have we lost for we have lost our sight.  
Hidden within our hearts we bear life's garnering,  
The silent wrongs of fate, relentless journeying  
Away from all that golden youth held dear, the blight  
Of aspirations unfulfilled ; the sting, the slight  
Of longing felt, of love requited not, and years  
With friendship unillumined, but, Lord, shed we no tears ;  
What Moses saw on Horeb's Mount, transfused with trust,  
We hope to see when life's sad pageant ends in dust.  
Kindling the lamp of God's love down the steep road  
Of darkness we go ever longing for the best abode,  
Where purged of all our sordid nature's boast and pride  
We will merge our lesser lights in Light thus sanctified.  
Deep gloom enfolds our dreaming souls for want of light,  
Brother : much have we lost for we have lost our sight.

## MIRA—THE RAJPUT QUEEN OF CHITOR

The Rana did not hear your music sad  
As underneath the reddening mango-grove  
You chanted forth your simple songs of love  
And beauty 'midst the sadhus rapture-mad.  
The whispers reached him from the market-place  
Telling the wayward paths you trod. He thought  
You had some sweeter love than his and wrought  
Upon his kingly line untold disgrace.  
O golden-hearted Sappho of the East !  
You broke a fragment of your lyric soul  
With godhead crowned for mortal man to feast ;  
The Rana then divined your secret goal.  
In shame and sorrow now began his quest  
While you at Brindaban were Girdhar's guest.

## THE PILGRIM

The lightning's flash revealed the living soul  
Of massive inky clouds heaped in the sky ;  
The rain-drops, opal bright, soft fell to die  
In the dry dust. The ocean's thundrous roll  
Dashed 'gainst the stillness of the starless night.  
His lost gold, trackless, sought the faint fire-fly  
Beneath yon banyan soot-besmirched. A sigh  
Escaped a doubt-tossed, death-blind pilgrim, dight  
In raiment travel-tarnished, torn ; his goal  
Was God. Two dark flint stones he struck with might  
To kindle fire, perchance the light of love,  
To guide him to that far-off tryst above ;  
The spark shone like a beacon to the night,  
Heaven's winds set it aflame,—it burnt his soul.

# 9 • BALDOON DHINGRA

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[A young man of high academic qualifications, he has also many cultural attainments to his credit. Born in June 1909, he had his early education at Bishop Cotton School, Simla, and at Craighurst, Suffolk, England. Later, from 1928 to 1931, he was at the University of London studying Philosophy and Journalism. In 1933 he took a Diploma from Paris University (Sorbonne) in French Civilization. From 1933 to 1936 he was at the Queen's College, Cambridge, and passed with distinction both parts of the English Tripos. While abroad, he learnt German, Italian and Spanish. He also worked for sometime at the University of Cologne. On his return to India in 1936, he was taken up as lecturer in English in the Government College, Lahore. Mr. Dhingra is a poet, playwright and critic. He has published five books of verse, a book of critical essays—*Writ in Sand*, and a play—*For Heaven is Here*. He has under preparation another book entitled—*A National Theatre for India*. Mr. Dhingra's poetry is a fascinating blend of vigour and vision, thought and sensitiveness. He is a poet of illusion as well as of disillusion, of Man as well as of Nature. His approach to his themes is always fresh and original, while his mastery of choice words and chiselled phrases is enviable. The late Rabindranath Tagore said just the right thing when he wrote to Mr. Dhingra : " Your poems as I read them, aroused ripples of delight in my heart like the rhythmic response your oars won from the stream you mentioned. These lines have a serenity of poise that brings to my mind a bird's wings that have mastered the air." And well does Mr. Dhingra deserve the compliment of *Triveni* as " the premier poet among the younger men in India." More and yet more verses from his pen will certainly be an asset to Indo-English poetry.]

## COMES EVER THE DAWN

It seems as though the night were one great harp,  
Whereon a low wind moves, with velvet touch,  
Stirring a formless murmur from the strings,  
Music that has no structure or design,  
Yet bears a load of meaning ; and that load  
Of infinite vibrations everywhere,  
Is just the throb of human passion, spread  
Throughout all Being from our shaken hearts.

We have made heavy with Love the slumb'rous air,  
Added a subtle burden to night's warm breath,  
Poured out more than the roses dreamed in the dew ;  
Are not lovers one with the soul of the world ?

Starlit peaks are pale with eternal desire,  
Olive and cypress shiver with straining hope,  
Moth and bat are messengers, bearing the call ;—  
Are not lovers one with the soul of the world ?

Here, at our feet, the water, lapping the stones,  
Lisps and whispers words in a wonderful tongue  
Learned by the lake, in talk with the mirrored moon,—  
Are not lovers one with the soul of the world ?

Measureless heart-beat, throb of the pulses that feed  
Life of meadow and woodland, fathomless sigh,  
Blown from passionate river and yearning sea ;  
Are not lovers one with the soul of the world ?

So has the self-complacent song been sung  
By men of every time,  
Under the same enchantment lured  
To dream that for their pride alone  
Was atom piled on atom,  
Till slow laborious growth made perfect this great whole,  
Yielding the vast variety  
Of vision and sensation, for the boards  
Whereon was nobly staged the drama of their lives.

How the stars mock  
These idle babbles of our vanity,  
Staring with their impenetrable gaze !  
Responsive, you and I,  
Whose ears are ever tuned to laughter, catch,—  
Though our mood be exalted,—the faint echo  
Of merriment celestial, making plain  
The true proportions and importance due.  
Ripples of tender raillery, that chime  
Softly from yonder quaking waters, rouse  
Answering agitation in the calm,  
Of our profound and mutual absorption,

Reminding us

That, heedless of our race,

The cosmic process works,

That not alone to guide the voyager

Glitters the piercing Pole-star in the sky,

That flowers will bloom for no man's scent and fruit

Ripen for no man's appetite, and boughs

Lavish their shade where no man ever lies.

We and our love shall vanish like last year's leaves,

With countless lovers before, countless to come,

With all the pomp and clamour of human-kind,

With vain ambitions, empty, arrogant hopes,

With power and riches and government and fame,

But after the stars go out, comes ever the Dawn.

Still would the chestnuts ripen, even if man

Never should walk to gather them, still would rain

Soak to fatten the seed and dissolve to mould

Rotting, fallen foliage—We are no more

Than changing spadefulls, shovelled in garden work ;

But after the stars go out, comes ever the Dawn.

We have our destiny, we, who do not know

Why or how we have happened, what we shall be,

Whether you or I in reality are ;

We have a share in something beyond our thought ;

Love and Life have their value; there is no waste

And, after the stars go out, comes ever the Dawn.

## THE UNCONQUERABLE

What is it that thrills and troubles, wakens and benumbs ?

Why are hopes unfurled again with every Spring that comes ?

Why do marching pulses beat the heart's defiant drums ?

Unfulfilment cannot cloud the spirits that aspire,

Cannot quench the radiance of vitality whose fire

On a sea of hope throws the searchlight of desire—



Enervating argument and proverb pessimist  
Cannot close the motion of an infinite pursuit,  
*Cannot conquer forces that eternally persist,*  
Cannot hush life's clarion or make the bugles mute.

Batteries of hope are silenced : charging ardours halt ;  
Dreams in broken regiments are driven from the field.  
Squadrons of belief disordered turn from the assault,  
One thin line of thought alone can stand and never yield.

Thought, pervading chaos, is the constant that survives ;  
Thought, the core of being, the main current of the whole ;  
Impulse partly manifest in clumsy human lives,  
Witness to the challenge of a purpose and a goal.

We, who plunge and blunder, in the dark morass of tears,  
Are but foam ephemeral on pools of consciousness.  
Action—matter—all the changing pageant that appears  
Hints the revelation we are diligent to guess,  
Knowing how the greater may be hidden by the less.

Bubbles on the surface are the things that man has made,  
And puffs of air the deeds that he has done.  
Death is but the flickering dominion of a shade  
And life a waning moment in the sun.  
Accident or chance can only mar  
Our life's outer garment. We are hedged in what we do,  
But nought can set the bounds to what we are.

## DAY AND NIGHT

Day is a golden grain of corn  
Which the sun sows ;  
Night is the crow that eats the corn  
Before it grows.

Around, around that field the world  
Ever the crow  
Follows that sower as he walks  
Still to and fro.

O look behind you, sun, to see  
    Who follows black—  
Ironie and laconic—on  
    Your patient track.

•  
He will not turn, he will not see—  
    Or does not care ;  
Ever he flings his seeds to be  
    Night's golden fare.

And if some day the sun should tire,  
    With dark wings furled  
The crow of Night would pause and perch  
    Upon the world.

# 10

## MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT

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[Remembered and honoured till today as one of the earliest important figures of the Bengali literary renaissance and as the first great herald of a new age in Bengali poetry, Madhusudan Dutt was a very gifted and interesting person. Living for hardly fifty years and passing through a chequered career, he yet made his vital contribution to Bengali literature and to Indo-English poetry. Born in 1824 in a village in Jessore District, he had his early education in the Primary school of that village, and later joined the Hindu College at Calcutta in 1837. Here he distinguished himself very soon by carrying away many scholarships, prizes and medals. He was also well-known for his pretty English verses—which he wrote with great ease and felicity. Verses naturally flowing from his pen, he wrote many satires on and epistles to his school companions. A passionate admirer of Byron and the other Romantic poets, he used to write poems after their manner, and send them to *Blackwood's Magazine*—some of them dedicated to Wordsworth! In 1843 he embraced Christianity against the wishes of his parents and joined the Bishops' College where he acquired proficiency in Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Persian. In 1848 he went to Madras where he soon became famous as an Indo-English poet. He was also connected, in one capacity or other, with newspapers and journals like *The Madras Circulator*, *The Madras Spectator*, *The Hindoo* and *The Athaeneum*. He was for sometime a teacher in the School Department (now known as the Presidency College) of the Madras University. He married Rebecca, daughter of a local indigo-planter, but divorced her after seven years. He then married Emilia Henrietta Sophia, daughter of a French professor, who became his life-long companion. It was while in Madras that Madhusudan Dutt published his first long poem in English—*The Captive Ladie* (1849)—which “at once demonstrated the ability of the Bengali educated in Bengal to capture the elusive spirit of English metrical form.” In 1856 he returned to Calcutta where he became the Head Clerk of the local Police Court, and later, its Interpreter. While in Calcutta, he came into contact with a set of enthusiastic youngmen who were trying to revive Bengali drama, and soon made his name as the greatest contemporary writer in Bengal by giving to its literature—blank verse, Petrarchan Sonnet, *vers libre*, new lyrical metres, social farces, and historical comedies. His epic—*The Slaughter of Meghnad*, modelled on Homer—is a masterpiece of its kind. In 1867 he went to England, entered Gray's Inn, and was called to the Bar. Re-

turning to Calcutta in 1869, he practised as an Advocate at the High Court for sometime, but not finding it lucrative, took up the post of Examiner of the Privy Council Records. In 1872 he became manager of Panchkote Raj, but gave it up soon. On June 29, 1873, he died in great poverty, friendless and broken, in the Free General Hospital in Calcutta.

*The Captive Ladie, Visions of the Past* and some short stray verses—are all Madhusudan's contribution to Indo-English poetry. The first poem (from which an extract is given below) narrates the romantic story of Prithvi Raj and his conflict with the Muslim invaders, while the second one (from which also an extract is given below) describes the Primeval Innocence, the Temptation of Man and his Fall in the form of visions. As a poet, Madhusudan Dutt followed the footsteps of Scott and Byron, and acquired great proficiency in blank verse. His poetry, though mostly imitative, is a degree better than that of Kashiprosad Ghose, and possesses remarkable fluency and a sure command of rhythm and metrical forms. Great as a writer in Bengali, Madhusudan has yet his place of honour in Indo-English poetry as one of its early pioneers.]

## TO A STAR DURING A CLOUDY NIGHT

Shine on, sweet emblem of Hope's lingering ray,  
That while the soul's bright sun-shine is o'er-cast,  
Gleams faintly thro' the sable gloom, the last  
To meet beneath Despair's dark night away !  
Tho' lawless clouds rest round thee, and they seem,  
As if, impatient to enshroud thy brow,  
Yet, O sweet Star ! thy dim and struggling beam,  
That, like the weed which angry tempests throw,  
Far from their native soil in the dark wave.  
Now, sinking, as if buried, disappears,  
Now bursting forth from its dark cloudy grave,  
Sails trembling on pale with a thousand fears,  
Has charms that still may please the gazer's eye.  
Than solitary tenant of the sky !

## EXTRACT FROM THE CAPTIVE LADIE

( A dramatic description of Mahmud of Ghazni's murderous intent towards  
the besieged Hindus of Delhi )

A thousand lamps all gaily shine  
Along the wide extended line ;  
And loud the laugh and proud the boast  
Swells from that fierce, un-number'd host ;  
And wild the prayer ascends on high—  
Dark vengeance thine impatient cry—

“ Oh ! for a glimpse of Day’s fair brow  
To crush yon city towering now,  
To make each Kafir bosom feel  
The unerring blade of Moslem steel !  
By Alla ! how I long to be  
Where myriads writhe in agony,  
And mark each wretch with rolling eye  
Call on false gods, then curse and die,  
Meet pilgrim for the dire domain.  
Where Eblis holds his sunless reign !  
Tomorrow—Oh ! why wilt thou, Night  
Thus veil the smile of Day so bright ?  
We want not now thy Moon and Star  
In pensive beauty shrin’d afar,—  
We want not now thy pearly dew  
To dim our falchion’s blood-red hue—  
Thy lonely breath thus passing by,  
Like Beauty’s whispered farewell sigh :  
Go !—Hie thee hence !—where Rocnabad,  
With murmuring waters wildly glad,  
Doth woo thy stars to silver rest  
Upon its gently-heaving breast ;  
Or, where soon as the sun hath set,  
And dome, kiosk and minaret  
Glow with thy pale moon’s gentler beam,  
Like the bright limnings of some dream,  
The lover gaily tunes his lay—  
The rosy bowers of Mosellay :  
We want thee not—the brightest flood  
The fiery sun can ever shed  
Must blaze o’er warriors’ deeds of blood,  
And light him on whene’er he tread  
The field where foe-men, fierce and brave,  
Meet, slay or win a bloody grave !”

## SATAN (FROM VISIONS OF THE PAST)

A form of awe he was—and yet it seemed  
A sepulchre of beauty—faded, gone,  
Mouldering where memory fond mourner keeps  
Her lonesome vigils sad—to chronicle  
The Past—and tell its tale of coming years.

Or like a giant tree in mighty war  
With storm on whirlwind car and fierce array  
Blasted and crushed—of all its pride bereft.  
Or like a barque which oft had walked the deep  
In queenlike majesty—and proudly brave—  
But by the fiery hand of some dread fiend  
Nursed in starless caves of ocean, shorn  
Of all its beauty in the boundless surge  
A phantom of departed splendour lone.

# 11. TORU DUTT

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[Prophetic were the lines which the late Sir Edmund Gosse wrote more than half a century ago : “ When the history of the literature of our country comes to be written, there is sure to be a page in it, dedicated to this fragile exotic blossom of song.” Posterity has been cherishing with affection and esteem the fragrant poetry of this lily of a day ! The Gods loved her and she died young. Admirers of genuine poetry love her work still and have not allowed it to perish. She lived just for twenty-one years—from 4th March 1856, to 30th August 1877—‘ one crowded hour of glorious life.’ She went abroad at the age of thirteen. She stayed at Nice for sometime and went to a French *Pensionnat*—the only school she ever attended. Then she stayed in Paris for sometime and learnt the language and caught the spirit of its literature, and gave the world a few years afterwards *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*—containing translations into English of some two hundred poems by about seventy French writers. From France she went to England in 1870—studied the English Classics, learnt singing and music and French, attended the higher lectures for women in 1871 at Cambridge, and returned to India in 1873. She spent her remaining few years at Baugmaree and Calcutta alternately—reflecting, reading, writing. But long lingering illness took its final toll, and ‘ this eager, passionate and beautiful spirit passed from this world.’

Toru Dutt died—but left for the world a rich legacy of song—meagre in quantity but fine in quality. *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindusthan*—a collection of her long and short poems—was published in 1882 with an introduction by Edmund Gosse. Most of the poems deal with themes of Indian mythology, while a few are concerned with her personal moods and feelings. The stories from the Hindu epics and legends which Toru heard in her childhood from her mother—made a deep impress upon her mind. It is this legendary lore that she interprets in her longer poems. These poems also reveal her metrical skill in blank verse. The few personal poems are written as sonnets—and exhibit her sensitiveness to Nature, her tender sentiment and strength and greatness of intellect. Of the two poems included here—*Sita* is based on a legen-

dary story and, “ artistically, the poem, short as it is, is among the best of the ballads. Simple and vivid in style, it is skilfully touched with a delicate pathos by the closing lines.” *The Lotus* is a dainty poem, if in a somewhat trifling vein, explaining the origin of the queenliest flower that blows. It also shows Toru’s fine command of the sonnet. In the words of E. J. Thompson—“ Toru Dutt remains one of the most astonishing women that ever lived, a woman whose place is with Sappho and Emily Bronte, fiery and unconquerable of soul as they ; and few statements, one feels, can more triumphantly sustain fair examination than this . . . These poems are sufficient to place Toru Dutt in the small class of women who have written English verse that can stand.” Truly, Toru Dutt is “ the first-born star in a heaven of many lights.”]

## S I T A

Three happy children in a darkened room !  
 What do they gaze on with wide-open eyes ?  
 A dense, dense forest, where no sunbeam pries,  
 And in its centre a cleared spot.—There bloom  
 Gigantic flowers on creepers that embrace  
 Tall trees ; there, in a quiet lucid lake  
 The white swans glide ; there, “ whirring from the brake,”  
 The peacock springs; there, herds of wild deer race;  
 There, patches gleam with yellow waving grain ;  
 There, blue smoke from strange altars rises light.  
 There, dwells in peace, the poet-anchorite.  
 But who is this fair lady ? Not in vain  
 She weeps,—for lo ! at every tear she sheds  
 Tears from three pairs of young eyes fall amain,  
 And bowed in sorrow are the three young heads.  
 It is an old, old story, and the lay  
 Which has evoked sad Sita from the past  
 Is by a mother sung . . . ’Tis hushed at last  
 And melts the picture from their sight away,  
 Yet shall they dream of it until the day !  
 When shall those children by their mother’s side  
 Gather, ah me ! as erst at evenide ?



## THE LOTUS

Love came to Flora asking for a flower  
That would of flowers be undisputed queen,  
The lily and the rose, long, long had been  
Rivals for that high honour. Bards of power  
Had sung their claims. "The rose can never tower  
Like the pale lily with her Juno mien"—  
"But is the lily lovelier?" Thus between  
Flower-factions rang the strife in Psyche's bower.  
"Give me a flower delicious as the rose  
And stately as the lily in her pride"—  
"But of what colour?"—"Rose-red," Love first chose,  
Then prayed,—"No, lily-white,—or, both provide ;"  
And Flora gave the lotus, "rose-red" dyed,  
And "lily-white,"—the queenliest flower that blows.

# 12. KASHIPROSAD GHOSE

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[This precocious man, who lived from 1809 to 1873, has his place in Indo-English poetry as its originator—and not on account of any special poetic merit. Wasting his early years in idle pursuits, Kashiprosad did not learn the alphabet till the age of twelve, and attended school when he was fourteen ! But it did not take long for the gifted young boy to distinguish himself—especially by his mastery of the English language. He was easily the brightest student of the Hindu College, Calcutta, which he left in 1828. While at College he astonished his teachers by writing a lengthy review of the first four chapters of Mill's *History of British India*. Considered as good, it was published in the *Government Gazette* for 14th February 1829, and was soon after reproduced in the *Asiatic Journal*. Subsequently, Kashiprosad wrote and published many volumes of prose and verse both in Bengali and English, among which may be mentioned—*The Shair and other Poems*, *The Vision—a Tale, on Bengali Works and Writers*, *Sketches of Ranjit Singh*, *The King of Oudh*, and some three hundred Bengali songs. He also edited an English weekly—*The Hindu Intelligence* from 1845 to 1857.

Having from early childhood a fancy to write poetry in English, Kashiprosad assiduously cultivated the art by reading Murry's *Prosody* and Lord Kame's *Elements of Criticism*. He also read the best English poets in a regular and measured tone which soon accustomed his ear to English rhythm. The result was a ponderous volume of two hundred pages under the title *The Shair, or Minstrel, and other Poems* in 1830. The volume was dedicated in parts to such famous contemporaries as H. H. Wilson and H. M. Parker and, as a whole, to Lord William Bentinck. The book was very highly and flatteringly reviewed by D. L. Richardson, the scholar-poet, in the *Literary Gazette*. The title-poem in the volume is written in the manner of Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and is full of "conventional descriptions of nature and tedious moralising in which English poetry of the 18th century and contemporary Bengali poetry abounded." Nor are the other poems interesting. Those concerning Hindu festivals are after the manner of Jones' hymns to the Hindu deities—'agreeably imitative.' They lack originality both in themes and treatment. The following two poems reveal the conventional and mechanical nature of Kashiprosad's poetry. If nothing else, they will at least show, by contrast with the other poems included, how far Indo-English poetry has travelled on the path of perfection—since its originator's time !]

## THE BOATMEN'S SONG TO GANGA

Gold river ! gold river ! how gallantly now  
Our bark on thy bright breast is lifting her prow  
In the pride of her beauty, how swiftly she flies :  
Like a white-winged spirit thro' topaz-paved skies.

Gold river ! gold river ! thy bosom is calm,  
And o'er thee, the breezes are shedding their balm :  
And nature beholds her fair features portrayed,  
In the glass of thy bosom—serenely displayed.

Gold river ! gold river ! the Sun to thy waves,  
Is fleeting to rest in thy cool coral caves ;  
And thence, with his tier of light, at the morn  
He will rise, and the skies with his glory adorn.

Gold river ! gold river ! how bright is the beam,  
Which brightens and crimsons thy soft flowing stream ;  
Whose waters beneath make a musical clashing, ,  
Whose ripples like dimples in childhood are flashing.

Gold river ! gold river ! the moon will soon grace  
The hall of the stars with her light-shedding face ;  
The wandering planets her palace will throng,  
And serapns will waken their music and song.

Go'd river ! gold river ! our brief course is done,  
And safe in the city our home we have won ;  
And now as the bright sun who drops from our view,  
So Ganga, we bid thee a cheerful adieu !

## THE MOON IN SEPTEMBER

How like the breath of love the rustling breeze  
Is breathing through the fragrant sandal trees !  
How sad but sweet the Bulbul sings above—  
The rose plucked off its stalk—his withering love !  
Like liquid silver yon soft-gliding stream  
Wanders and glistens in the lunar beam,  
Which like a modest maid, in love and fear  
Shrinks, half reluctant, from the clasp so dear  
Of frequent-heaving waves. But see ! a cloud  
Hath wrapt the Moon like Beauty in a shroud.

But now, she issuing shines with brightest sheen,  
And tips with silver all the woodlands green.  
Region of bliss ! Irradiate gem of night !  
Soother of sorrows ! Orb of gentle light !  
Full right the bards of ancient days suppose  
Thou wert the region where the deities chose  
To hide their nectar from the demons fell,  
Destroyed or headlong hurled to deepest hell.  
For still, resplendent Moon ! whene'er we see  
Thy placid face, and fondly gaze on thee,  
Its gentleness upon the wounded soul  
Exerts a healing power and calm control.

# 13

## MANMOHAN GHOSE

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[Here is a unique Indian writer—of verse in English—unique on account of the fact that his poetry is entirely western in taste and allusion. Except the ‘passionate emotionalism which underlies almost all his lyrical verse’—there is nothing in his poetry to betray the poet’s origin. His intimacy with Greek and Latin is obvious in his themes and technique. He writes of Nature—of Nature in England—of poplar, birch, beech, willow and oak—even while in India. All this because his mind was moulded in the most impressionable period of his life by English and European thought, environment and influences. Born on 19th January 1869 at Bhagalpur, he was sent to England at the early age of seven along with his brother—now the world-known Sri Aurobindo. Young Manmohan first joined the Manchester Grammar School and later, the St. Paul’s School at London—where he had the late Laurence Binyon as school-fellow. Then, after a somewhat chequered career, he took his degree from Oxford in 1893. The next year—after an absence of nearly eighteen years—he returned to India—a stranger to his own country, people, language, customs and manners. For this reason—he felt throughout the rest of his life—an exile in his own motherland—and longed to go back to England! Almost immediately after his return here, he took to an educational career, and after seeing service at different places, he finally settled in Calcutta as Professor of English in the Presidency College. With ‘a halo of romance and mystery’ surrounding him, he delivered his lectures which were like ‘overheard soliloquies’ to admiring students who wondered at the way in which he transmitted all knowledge into beauty, and ‘opened the gates of poetry’ before them. But all this was no consolation to the ‘broken man who bore the countenance of one tragically fated.’ He received the shock of his life in 1918 when his wife, whom he had married at Dacca in 1898, died. This was the beginning of the end of Manmohan. Constant ill-health and mental worry caused loss of eyesight—which, in its turn, compelled him to retire in 1921. On January 4, 1924, he died of heart disease—leaving unfulfilled his longing to go to England for which he had booked a passage!]

Manmohan Ghose’s life was a tragedy—but his poetry is a triumph!—a triumph of spirit over flesh, of mind over matter. He ‘lisped in numbers for the numbers came’—even when he was at the Manchester Grammar School. At Oxford, he published some of his poems in *Primavera* (1890) along with those of Binyon, Stephen Phillips, Arthur Cripps—whose personal friendship he enjoyed. At

London he revelled in the intellectual company of Addington Symonds, Oscar Wilde, Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson. In 1898 he published *Love Songs and Elegies* (Elkin Matthews). The next year—three of his poems were included in *The Garland*. And when he died—he left a mass of unpublished writings—lyrics, narrative poems, two unfinished epics and one fragment of a drama on the theme of Perseus. Out of all this, Laurence Binyon made a selection and published it under the title *Songs of Love and Death*, (Basil Blackwell, 1926)—with a valuable introductory memoir. Now all the literary remains of the late Manmohan Ghose are in the possession of the Calcutta University—to which they were presented by his daughters. Manmohan's themes are varied—love, death, nature, seasons, and the home-sickness of the soul. Whatever the theme, two characteristics are clear—an amazing technical perfection and a pathetic note of sadness. Soaked in European literature and European art—he could not write on Indian themes, or in any other manner except that of a scholar. But what matters it if there is no 'Indianness' in his poetry? He has written poetry like one born to write! The two poems included here are typical of Manmohan's poetic outlook and poetic expression. To quote the comments of his own daughter, the distinguished Miss Latika Ghose: "It (*London*) is a revolt from the glorification of country life and gives the rush and rapture of town life, the joy of human sympathy and charm of human faces. . . . one of the most perfect and most original of Ghose's poems." *April* is a beautiful nature poem—of Nature in England—and shows that the poet "does not miss a single flower or forget their order of appearance. All the sights and sounds of Spring, its fresh gaiety the tumultuous resurge of life, the very warmth in the air, are reflected in the poem."].

## L O N D O N

Farewell, sweetest country; out of my heart, you roses,  
 Wayside roses, nodding, the slow traveller to keep.  
 Too long have I drowsed alone in the meadows deep,  
 Too long alone endured the silence Nature espouses.  
 Oh, the rush, the rapture of life! throngs, lights, houses,  
 This is London. I wake as a sentinel from sleep.

Stunned with the fresh thunder, the harsh delightful noises,  
 I move entranced on the thronging pavement. How sweet,  
 To eyes sated with green, the dusty brick-walled street!  
 And the lone spirit, of self so weary, how it rejoices  
 To be lost in others, bathed in the tones of human voices,  
 And feel hurried along the happy tread of feet.

And a sense of vast sympathy my heart almost crazes,  
The warmth of kindred hearts in thousands beating with mine.  
Each fresh face, each figure, my spirit drinks like wine,—  
Thousands endlessly passing. Violets, daisies,  
What is your charm to the passionate charm of faces.  
This ravishing reality, this earthliness divine ?

O murmur of men more sweet than all the wood's caresses,  
How sweet only to be an unknown leaf that sings  
In the forest of life ! Cease, Nature, thy whisperings.  
Can I talk with leaves, or fall in love with breezes ?  
Beautiful boughs, your shade not a human pang appeases.  
This is London. I lie, and twine in the roots of things.

## APRIL

April delicious

Young, sunny maiden,  
Arch, gusty, capricious,  
With fresh flowers laden,  
After dead winter long  
Thrill us with sweet bird-song,  
After dry March's drought,  
Blow from thy rainy mouth !

Hasten to kiss us  
With the fresh daffodil  
Through and through golden !  
On green bank, by every rill  
Pale cowslips embolden,  
And white narcissus  
Make o'er his dreaming pool  
His wan face beautiful  
Hang like a lover.  
Set for the honey-bees  
Budding anemonies  
And pink white clover.  
Now on the greening leas  
Hasten, oh hasten up,  
In yellow companies  
The laughing buttercup,  
And to the meadow-pomp  
Lure, lure the children out.

In mad crowds with merry shout  
To pull them, dance, and romp  
By their glad nurses.  
And fresh green sights to woo,  
Thy lovely face to view  
Lure, lure the poet too,  
    Humming his verses !  
I will not praise thee, April, if thou spare  
    Of all thy stormy freshness, one slant shower  
To take the grey east from the shrinking air  
And slake the wind-choked miserable parch  
Of a bleak world that trembles out of March.  
    I will not sing of thee unless thou flower  
    Millions of daisies, hour by sunlit hour,  
To jewel the simple grass out of the skies  
With less cold, nearer stars, and make earth paradise.

Oh to be flowery,  
Dripping and balmy,  
Call up the showery  
White clouds, an army !  
Shallow and freshet flush  
Green as the grasses lush;  
By shady soft degrees  
Thicken the leafy trees  
To reach out dreamily  
Wall and lane over,  
    Till in fresh groves are heard,  
In the green clover,  
    Warbling their lays each bird  
Over and over.

    Curd wild brooks creamily ;  
Let not the bulrush lag,  
Quickened the flowering flag.  
Till in reeds stilly  
Soon the wild swan shall nest  
Preening his dazzling breast  
    By the oped lily.  
Make listening echo sweet  
    By the full waterfall,  
Dimly and oft repeat  
    The haunting cuckoo-call.



With all that shady is

Hasten to bower the land !

Elm, oak, and tall beach grand

Of dim isles that lady is

Where greenness shall hover,

And where a tall thin mist

Rises, the green wheat whist,

Chatters the crake; make tryst

Fond lass and lover !

Haste, April, upon city streets to blow

Thy purest, warmest breezes; fly beneath

The flower-girl's rags, poor beggary's basket stow

With lordliest gold of daffodils aglow.

I will not love thee, save with sighing breath

On pale, worn cheeks thou waft reprieve of death.

Come in a wash of fragrance, let sick eyes

See leaves bud, bird-song hear through windowed paradise.

# 14. HUMAYUN KABIR

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[A member of the Bengal Legislative Council, one of the prominent leaders of the Krishak Proja Party, an inspirer and organiser of student, labour and peasant movements in Bengal, once President of the All-India Muslim Students' Conference (1937), Prof. Humayun Kabir is, in addition, a variedly gifted man-of-letters. He is a poet, a critic, a short-story writer, an Editor (of *Bharat* from 1931 to 1932, and at present of *Chaturanga*—a Bengali quarterly journal), and an enthusiast of literary interests and cultural pursuits. His publications include—*Sathee* (1931) *Ashtadashee* (1935), *Kant On Philosophy in General* (1935), *Swapnasadh* (1937), *Banglar Kaeya* (1941), *Dharavahik* (1942), *Sarat Chandra Chatterjee* (1942), *Moslem Politics* (1943). Two other books—*Indian Culture* and *Mahatma and Other Poems* are in the press. Born in 1906, he had a brilliant academic career at the Calcutta and Oxford Universities. After working for sometime at the Andhra University, he is now Lecturer in Philosophy in the Calcutta University. The Sir George Stanley Lectures for 1941 which he delivered at the Madras University and which have been published by the Calcutta University under the title—*Poetry, Monads and Society*—reveal Prof. Kabir's critical acumen and interpretative power. His poetry, on the other hand, exhibits his exquisite creative power. His is a somewhat fugitive muse ! He writes poetry sparingly and that mostly in Bengali. Some translations of these by himself and a few poems written originally English were brought out in book form by Basil Blackwell, Oxford, in 1932, under the unassuming title—*Poems*. The verses, though few, demonstrate Prof. Kabir's undeniable poetic merit. He has the enviable gift of frequent phrasing and the capacity to invoke picturesque images as in the poems—*The sea, Twilight, Attic Marble, and The Birth of Venus*. In some poems like *The Voyage, After Death, Doubts* and *The Quest*, philosophic emotion and poetic effect achieve a happy harmony. And all his verses have the "full-brimmed flight" of the Padma river of which he sings. Rich with suggestion, virile and yet sensitive, graceful and flowing with colour—Prof. Kabir's poetry certainly enriches the boundaries of our aesthetic enjoyment. We demand of him to continue his 'restless and dissatisfied longing for the far horizon' and to give us more and more poems—whose 'ascending notes soaring up the scale'—build 'a marvellous mansion of music in the dark.']

## FAITH

She believed, she said, and there was nothing more to say  
And all my eager questionings over life and death  
Seemed on the seashore of Time like mere children's play,  
—I drew in my breath.

I thought perhaps Revolt carried itself too far,  
That Heresy could never find a gospel of its own,  
Our quest of truth is waste of soul, but peace for her  
Lay in faith alone.

—Originally published in *Oxford Poetry*, 1930.

## MAHATMA

Across vast spaces and vast times he strode  
buoyed upon the hopes of an ancient race  
achieving courage out of dark despair.  
Like a huge serpent resting coil on coil  
slept the vast country in involuted sloth,  
but a breath of life stirs every vein,  
for Gandhi breaks the charm of magic sleep,  
brings back life till age-long lassitude  
drops like old dead skin from frozen limbs.

A puny figure strides upon the scene  
of vast and elemental suffering : Strides  
against a background where slow death  
paints in dull phantasmagoral grey  
the end of all endeavour, hope and faith.  
What secret magic transforms the scene ?  
Whence springs forth a deep abiding force  
that thrills the landscape with abundant life  
till the puny figure dominates the scene,  
over vast and elemental suffering triumphs,  
and with new birth's pang and radiance shoots  
the landscape's dull phantasmagoral grey ?

The static, dead and slothful continent  
thrills to a new song of hope, of forward move.  
The momentum gathers, the masses shake  
and strain and quiver for the onward march  
from slow decaying death to resplendent life.

A lone figure stands upon the sands of time,  
stands upon the shores of India's timeless space,  
draws upon its vast primeval wells  
of granite suffering and immemorial hopes :  
Launches India's resistless caravan  
into adventures new, a perilous path  
where out of life's substance must be carved  
new values, new direction, order new—  
Gandhi, mahatma, India's leader, India's soul.

## THE P A D M A

Only for a moment on this full-moon night  
After long years I meet you, River mine !  
Your banks are flooded with the Rains,  
Day and night you sing in forgetfulness of self,  
In full-brimmed flight your waters go rushing past  
Waking long-drawn echoes from the shuddering banks.

The banks groan and gasp under your terrific blows,  
But in concentrated self-centredness  
You go indulging in your sport of death.  
Do you remember the long years that have passed  
Since the day when in exultation of tumultuous joy  
You broke through your prison walls and ventured out ?

From then on alone you've travelled in sorrow and joy  
To flow day and night without rest or pause.  
The dim banks fade far away and music murmurs.  
Sometimes the *Sravan* floods descend in splendour,  
Sometimes the autumnal moon resplendent stands,  
Sometimes the spring comes expectant.

Have you yet found the lover at whose call  
— Lured from your childhood's home like a deer  
Bewitched by the notes of the hunter's pipe—  
You came rushing out with wildly beating heart ?  
The evenings follow the long weary days,  
Moonlit nights seek momentary rest on earth.

Yet you flow on and on unceasingly,  
Speaking soft words of solace to your troubled heart.  
But your wild spirit beats and will know no bonds,  
The screams of lightning flash upon the sky,  
In your mind and body stirs the dance of death,  
The banks tremble and shudder in your fatal embrace locked.

A serpent hissing in wrath you lift  
Your hood of waves to strike the cruel sky,  
In futile rage ! The sky stays safe above,  
With ironic laughter it mocks your efforts vain,  
From horizon to horizon it pours out the moon's radiance white,  
And in morning light touches to beauty the dust of the earth.

Your wounded heart swells within your breast :  
Madly you rush out in quest of new ways of life.  
The waters are churned grey in your frenzy wild,  
Seething with rage in devil's dance you beat  
At dusk and dawn upon the banks that crack  
And faint into your flow with long lamenting moans.

Still can you laugh like this with such a moon ?  
Sorrow's 'softest murmur lingers in your heart to-night,  
And yet you wear the moonlight's smile upon your lips ?  
I love this your smile in suffering :  
Methinks the snows heaped upon the mountain tops  
Are frozen tears and yet in the morning sun  
Laugh in golden glory: the joy of life in man  
Yearns upwards from the depths of the sea of pain.  
If laughter there were none in this our suffering world  
The buds would have died to dust before the blossoms came.  
And dim evening for ever dwelt upon this earth  
Making the heart grey with sad tired notes.

But now in your heart the current stirs again  
And floating from far away the faint murmurs come.  
In the swift sharp current let all suffering fade,  
In the sound of movement the moaning of the heart be lost  
Till pervading all consciousness there remain alone  
The sense of continual flow—the haunting smile of grief.

# 15

P. R. KAIKINI

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[It is a valuable emotional experience to go through the seven published poetry volumes of this young poet. He has gone a long way since the publication of his first two books in 1934 and 1936, respectively. The Victorian Attitude of polish and make-believe perceptible in them has given place to fire and brimstone. Mr. Kaikini's recent volumes reveal him as the undaunted singer of the ills and evils of the present-day world. He is unsparing in his attack of all that is false and fictitious, all that is treacherous and tyrannical, all that is opprobrious and oppressive. But he is not a mere discontented destroyer. He desires a holocaust of all that is undesirable in man and the universe—so that a new and better world may come into existence. He is cruel to be kind, sharp like the surgeon's knife which heals even as it cuts. Indian in many of his themes, he is yet international in his outlook. He has imbibed many modernist poetic influences, but has kept his own individuality. Some critics may liken him to Auden or MacNeice, but that is only for purposes of comparison. Mr. Kaikini is himself and nobody else. He is a new voice in Indo-English poetry—and what a voice ! Strident, ringing, bursting, fiery—how shall it be described ? His is a voice that compels attention, that strikes at the archways of the reader's mind and sets him thinking. His voice is louder than canon shot, his words are more deadly than bullets, and his pen mightier than the sword. But with all that, it is not harsh or grating. Possessing a remarkable sense of rhythm—in spite of its utter unconventionality, Mr. Kaikini imparts to his verses a genuine poetic charm that has an irresistible appeal. It is no surprise to know that he has many admirers both here and abroad. Anyone who has sense is bound to appreciate him and his marvellous gifts of poetic insight and poetic expression. Mr. Kaikini is fortunate in belonging to a cultured family. He was born at Bombay in 1912 of well-known Saraswat Brahmin parents whose ancestors wrote devotional poetry and discussed religious philosophy. Inheritor, thus, of intellectual and imaginative influences, Mr. Kaikini began his literary career early in life—with a play in Marathi at the age of fourteen. And he has successfully kept up the habit of writing verse in English which he developed even in his High School days. He holds the Master of Arts degree (in English literature) of the Bombay University, and is at present a teacher in one of the schools in that city. He is keenly interested in journalism, printing, education, films, rural reconstruction, music, painting, and, of course, poetry. This last is obviously his first love—for he has been consistent

in his loyalty to the Muse. And the proverbially capricious Goddess has indeed blessed him with a widely-recognised gift even at this early age. Indo-English poetry will be grateful to him if he continues to look on undaunted at the world, yes, and continues to sing on as undaunted as at present.]

## THE DONKEY

He wanders over the wild countryside  
A reckless rake,  
His feet proudly treading  
The snug familiar ground.

Sometimes he remembers  
And struts, remembering his ancestral glory  
Upon the cold still hill  
Under whose shady depths rests perchance an unknown king  
or clown.

Sometimes, he forgets  
And lingers and loiters long  
Over the unenchanted unbounded plain  
The holy sepulchre of Akbars and Alexanders

Often he dreams—  
And hears the bells and the flutter of leaves,  
Sees in a flash  
The sumptuous splendour of his buried days.

Oftener he wakes, the wretch—  
And carries sand and stone,  
Wood and water  
man and woman.  
Snarling under the relentless whip  
He swears as he trudges along the ever-winding way.  
He curses, curses all the way.

## THE MILLIONAIRE

As you race  
The machine of your new Rolls-Royce  
Your ten thousand employees  
Toiling in your mill from dawn to dusk  
Stop in their work  
To salute your passing phantom  
To ha-ha you, you primrose of power and pride !

You live in a palatial house  
With a large evergreen garden around  
Your porch looks impressive  
As the dusty years roll on  
Your brilliantly polished name-plate  
Bears your big name  
With empty high-sounding words  
That proclaim your regal pomp.

Two servants salaam you at your door  
And another, like a stand,  
Receives your stick and hat and coat  
Your drawing-room has an up-to-date settee  
Ten chairs for your children  
(Ten, yes, because you are an enlightened man  
And know what Russell, Ellis and Shaw stand for).

You believe in birth-control—for others  
And preside at large impressive meetings  
Read lengthy written addresses  
And bend your stiff neck  
To receive heavy tributes of garlands  
From plebian nobodies.

You import fashionable, well-advertized pictures  
From London, Paris and New York  
Because it is a custom of your fellows  
To hang them on your walls.  
You trim your plants  
Evince a keen interest  
In your garden and gardener,  
For, don't you work night and day  
For the common man's amelioration,  
Haven't you affirmed a hundred times  
That the same God created both the rich and poor  
That the same sun shines on them alike?

In the evening, you drive in your sports-car  
To the club to play bridge, billiards or tennis  
And regain your slackened vitality.



Dusk descends on this distracted world  
And casts into gloom a million souls  
Who have no resting-places and  
No eating-houses to go to,  
Whose unflinching eyes  
Flinch from looking at well-lighted houses and hotels,  
Who with a lost hope of slumber  
Sink into the night's oblivion.

Yet will they rise with the sun  
And rend the sea-shore of the silent earth  
With robust singing voices,  
Light the dusk-entombed land  
With the blazing torches of hunger  
And expose the whole tribe of hypocrites  
Who will vanish like a vast army of phantoms  
Into the devouring fog of nothingness.

## NOCTURNE

It was at night I awoke  
darkness enveloped all in gloom  
Frosty silence held  
prison palace tavern in thrall  
the gull and the nightingale  
forgot to cry  
                    the owl to hoot  
winter's voiceless thunder  
froze  
Water rock fire and  
                    human heart  
Cigarette stubs  
empty broken wine-glasses  
                    loaded ash-trays  
dirty sweat-ridden insensate trousers  
wet crumpled scarves and ties  
                    soiled shirts  
                    dishevelled hair  
goggled twilight eyes  
the sound  
of horns motors trams  
                    horses' hoofs  
                    bulls' bells

lost characteristics of a summer night  
revels of baud heirs of city profiteers . . .  
The correct number found

A 45

c block

a knock

reassuring tap

on the strangely familiar door

‘Yes I am in dear’,

echoes her answer from stifled air within

the shutters crack

the door opening

in he rushes

sleep sent staggering along the narrow stinking lane

a giggle

a grin of a smile.

It's morning in the world outside

the boy has brought your *Times*

and the flunkey is getting

your tea and toast

the town is astir with importunate bustle

mill-hands, lords, working women and aristocratic ladies

merchants, stock-brokers, swindlers, racketeers and bootleggers.

Where are they, O where are they ?

wandering, wandering without a home

at last they sleep

clasped embraced

in their room—their room

in their room—their room

Spanish bull-ring

gallant matadors

Andalusian heroes

in purple green and blue

crossing of antique silver

swords

under the myrtles of moon

a touch of the grey black pony

from distant Cordoba

wan spent lumps

of

flesh

planted in the living tomb.

# 16. MOHANLAL KASHYAP

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[Born in Jaipur on 8th October 1917, Mr. Kashyap took his B.A. degree from the Government College, Ajmer, and his M.A. (in English literature) from the Lucknow University in 1939. He was for sometime Lecturer in English in St. John's College, Agra, and is now working in the same capacity in the Bareilly College, Bareilly. Mr. Kashyap exhibited signs of his literary taste even while yet a student. He was connected with the now defunct *New Outlook* (Ahmedabad) as its literary editor and as honorary secretary of the Writer's Guild conducted by that journal. Mr. Kashyap has published one book of verse in English in 1941, and many poems, plays, stories and literary articles in newspapers and magazines. He is at present working on a novel relating to the nomad Tribes of Rajputana before the British Conquest. Mr. Kashyap, it may not be known to many, was a student of the late Principal Seshadri for a number of years, and was deeply influenced by him in his literary ambitions and attempts. In his poetry also, Mr. Kashyap follows his master, and writes with charm and grace. His genuine poetic sensitiveness reacts spontaneously to things both real and imaginary, and expresses itself with characteristic beauty. In the words of Nicholas Roerich, Mr. Kashyap touches 'various aspects of life, and dwells upon them in a sympathetic and appreciative mood.' Young Mr. Kashyap has a good poetic future—if he pursues his vocation with a true sense of beauty. In the first poem included here he gives an imaginative interpretation of a popular Hindu religious custom, while in the second he presents a realistic picture of a legendary place and its glamorous traditions.]

## RAKSHABANDHAN

My sister, will you bind  
My love to shield from life's distressing wind,  
Ensure my blood and nerve, my word and will  
To serve thy word, fulfil ?

Thy *kumkum*, grain of rice  
And sacred saffron thread of love entice  
My love, my life, my lotus-heart of dreams ;  
Bring back ecstatic gleams.

My subtle silver-songs  
Shall sing of thee and smooth thy wrongs ;  
Shall soar on thee, thy castle-gate  
And lure the wrath of fate.

•  
Thy tinge of saffron thread  
(Inspired a sacred love and made me mad)  
Will long remind me of Rakshabandhan—  
Love's cord so fondly spun.

## ON BRINDA'S SANDS

•  
The dust of centuries has stolen thy grace  
And unadorned looks have stained thy hallowed face  
While wilderness resides in thy song-spun space  
And vain, in vain, the rippling streams of Jumna trace  
Their proud eternal course, midst the merry throng  
Of *gopis* lost in ecstasies of song,  
Milkmaids and milkmen marching along,  
Praising Gopal, enchanter Shyam, on every tongue.  
The lone and quiet heaths and barren meads,  
Impoverished humble bowers, their heart now burns and bleeds,  
Now bleeds and burns, resenting soulless creeds  
On Brinda's streams and sands, desiring earthly meeds.  
On Brinda's sands, these chill and placid heaps,  
The wind echoes no rhymes but comes and mourns and weeps,  
In desert air pervades a soul that sleeps  
With pallor, pain and fear in Jumna's deeps.

# 17. J. KRISHNAMURTI

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[Honoured as the head of the international organization of the *Order of the Star in the East* and hailed as a “*World Teacher*” at the age of twelve—‘Krishnaji’ began his public career in the most glorious and enviable circumstances. In 1929, however, he repudiated all the glamour and greatness thrust upon him by his admirers, and opened a new chapter in his life. Born in 1897 in a middle-class Andhra family of Madanapalle in South India, Mr. Krishnamurti is nearing fifty, but he does not look it. He retains the charm of eternal youth, the spirit and spell of an unaging poet. His father being a theosophist, young Krishnamurti came into contact with the late Dr. Annie Besant, at an early age. Recognising in him the signs of a rare person, she took him under her protecting care and gave him the best of facilities for study in England and France. During this period of rare privileges—were well and truly laid the foundations of his future greatness. Widely travelled, he is one of the few Indians well-known in international circles. Today, he is not the head of any organization or the voice of any coterie; he represents himself, his spiritually-realized self. Possessing a catholic spirit, a cosmopolitan mind, a comprehensive vision, and fine polish and culture, he is a lineal descendant of the spiritual seers of India—Chaitanya, Kabir, Nanak, Vivekananda. His is the message of deeper thought and higher life—a message which is not a sermon but a song. It is thus that Mr. Krishnamurti is a poet. He has published two volumes of poems—*The Immortal Friend* and *The Search*—poems, pure and profound, throbbing with life, love and liberty. I have often heard it said that Mr. Krishnamurti does not like being called a poet. Perhaps not—in the conventional sense of the term; for he is a poet with a difference—a poet who writes in the most unconventioned rhythms of *vers libre*, a poet who speaks of Beauty, Love and Truth in their highest aspects in accents that are genuine, luminous and poetic. In all his poems there is the authentic presence of the ineffable spirit-song which carries on its forehead the amulet of a profound revelatory utterance. Rising above the narrow barriers of race, religion, country, caste, creed, conventions, customs, blind beliefs and orthodox dogmas—he sees the vision of life in all its majesty and gives expression to it in a sublimely poetic manner. And, eager to help others, he invites his fellow beings to partake of the joy and happiness of a free and fearless life, to possess spiritual abundance in order that they may tread the path of imperishable Truth. That is why his poetry possesses not only a distinct spiritual

intonation, but also a deep personal touch—the touch of one who has experienced an intensely-realised intimacy of relationship with the Supreme. But Mr. Krishnamurti is primarily a singer not a reformer, a poet not a preacher. His is the privilege of a poet-teacher—whose message is a song, not a treatise. He is a supreme singer of spiritual values admitted to the freedom and fraternity of the poets by an inalienable birth-right !]

## FROM “THE IMMORTAL FRIEND”

### II

Look where I may, Thou art there,  
Calm, happy,  
Filling my world—  
The embodiment of Truth.

As one beholds a light  
In the dark,  
At a distance,  
I saw Thee.

•

I have walked towards Thee  
Through many lives—  
In sorrow, in joy,  
In doubt, in suspicion,  
Over thorns, over fair fields,  
On the pavements of crowded cities.

I have known  
From the very foundation of the earth  
Of Thy glory,  
Of Thine existence,  
Of Thy beauty, that thrilled my soul.

Never was I certain,  
Never was I allowed to be at peace  
With myself,  
With man,  
Or with the fair heavens.  
Out of the great uncertainty,  
Certainty was born.

•

Like the eastern breeze,  
That suddenly springs into being,  
And calms the weary world,  
So have I realized.  
I walk henceforth in Thy shadow.

Because Thou art my eternal Companion,  
I am strong—  
Strong as the stream  
That rushes down the mountain side.  
Because Thou art my counsellor,  
I am unshakable,  
Because of Thee,  
I am full of wisdom,  
Because Thou hast sent me out,  
I am as nothing, as the passing wind,  
But because Thou hast shown Thyself to me,  
I am as the rivers  
That dance down to the sea.

Because of Thy bidding,  
What I do is for Thee.  
My heart is aflame,  
For I am come near unto Thee  
Everlastingly.

Each breath is transforming me  
Into Thine image.

Because Thou hast given me,  
I am full,  
Full as the ocean,  
Though all the rivers  
Do flow into it.

Thy majesty has awakened  
The power in me  
To shout from the mountain tops  
Thy Truth.

Thy look has burnt away  
The dross.  
I am pure.  
I am holy.

•  
As the rose is to the rose petal,  
So art Thou to me.  
As the mountain top  
That disappears into the clouds,  
So my love for Thee  
Disappears  
Into space.

As on the sunlit sea the waters dance,  
Joyous in their ecstasy,  
So is my heart  
Dancing for love of Thee.  
As the small raindrop  
Mingles in the vast ocean,  
So have I lost  
Myself  
In Thee.

As the shadows  
Grow of an evening,  
So has my soul  
Grown immense  
In Thy Light.

My love for Thee  
Has awakened the love  
For all.  
I must bring the world  
To Thee.

I must make Thee  
Their eternal Companion.  
They must know Thee  
As I know Thee—  
The perfect,  
The simple,  
The glorified,  
The fountain of Truth.



Knowing Thee,  
They will set aside their toys,  
Their small worlds, their playthings,  
Their pomp,  
The entanglements  
Of their religions,  
Their rites,  
Their ceremonies.

What is religion ?  
What is worship ?  
What are the temples  
And altars  
Of the world ?

Thou art the end  
Of all sorrow,  
Of all joy,  
Of all knowledge,  
Of all search.

Thou art the goal of all things.  
In Thee alone lies  
Enlightenment—  
The happiness of the world.

Look where I may, Thou art there,  
Calm, happy,  
Filling my world—  
The embodiment of Truth.

I am the Truth,  
I am the Law,  
I am the Refuge,  
I am the Guide, the Companion and the Beloved.

## VIII

O friend,  
Tell me of God.  
Where is He, by what manner do I find Him ?  
Among what climes, in what abodes ?  
Tell me, I am weary.

Read the Vedas,  
Do tapas, meditate,  
Perform rites and ceremonies,  
Practise austerities and renounce,  
Pray at His temple, among flowers and incense,  
Bathe in the sacred rivers,  
Visit the holy places,  
Be a devotee and pure of intelligence,  
In Kailas is His abode—  
There you will find Him, cried many.

Obey the Law,  
Take refuge in the Order,  
Kill not, steal not and commit no sin.  
Go to the shrine.  
Enter Nirvana—  
There you will find Him, cried many.

Read the Holy Book,  
Pray at His Church—there be many—  
This church will lead you to Him but beware of that,  
Serve, sacrifice,  
Do not judge, be merciful,  
In Heaven is His throne—  
There you will find Him, cried many.

Read the only Book  
Of the only God,  
Visit His abode on earth,  
Pray at the mosque,  
At the setting of the sun worship Him,  
Bahist is His abode—  
There you will find Him, cried many.

Work, work for humanity,  
Serve, serve your fellow-creatures,  
Follow this but beware of that path,  
Do the will of God,  
Follow blindly for I hold the key to His abode,  
Grasp this opportunity that He offers you,  
Sorrow and happiness lead to Him,  
If you do this, your search will end—  
Then you will find Him, shouted many.

I am weary, tired by the passage of time,  
Travelling on no path, I have come to Thee,  
Thou hast revealed Thyself to me.

Oh ! Thou art the round stone  
That grinds the rice in the peaceful village  
Amidst songs and laughter.  
Thou art the graven image  
That men worship in temples,  
With chants and solemn music.  
Thou art the dead leaf  
That lies torn on the dusty road,  
Trodden by the weary traveller.  
Thou art the solitary pine  
That stands majestic  
On the lonely hill.

Thou art the lame and mangy creature  
'That comes to my door, with a haunted look, hungry,  
That men abhor.  
Thou art the mighty elephant  
That is gaily robed,  
Carrying the nobles of the land.

Thou art the naked beggar  
That wanders from house to house,  
Wearily crying for alms.  
'Thou art the great of the land  
That are rich in possessions and books,  
That are well-fed and satisfied.  
Thou art the priests of all temples  
That are learned, proud and certain.

Thou art the harlot, the sinner, the saint and the heretic.

My search is at an end.  
In Thee I behold all things.  
I myself, am God.

# 18. M. KRISHNAMURTI

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[No, please—do not confuse this friend with his namesake in the previous pages ! It is true, they have some things in common—handsome personality, poetic temperament, and a common accident of birth in the Andhra area of the Madras Presidency. Even so, who would like to lose his identity in another ? . . . This young friend—for, young he is, being born in November 1912)—had no academic education in the sense in which we understand the term nowadays. But he had something much better—education in the University of Life ! From his fifth to the tenth year he studied Sanskrit and Vedanta at Hardwar under Swami Premananda Bharathi. And with this equipment he lectured during the next two years on *Bhagvat Gita*, *Panchadasi* and other Vedantic texts to large audiences in Andhra Desh. In 1923 he met Mr. Wilfred Stott, an English theosophist, at Madanapalle, and studied English and western philosophies under him. In 1929 he accompanied Raja Jai Prithvi Bahdur Singh of Nepal on a goodwill tour through the West. While on this tour, he delivered lectures on various subjects at different places in Europe and in England—including the House of Commons. On his return to India, he took to journalism for sometime—as assistant editor of the *Daily Post* of Bangalore. At this time, he wrote a play *The Flag of Peace*—for the Humanistic Club in the same city. In 1935 he took up political service as private secretary to H. H. the Thakore Saheb of Limbdi in Kathiawad. The next year he went on a second tour to Europe—visiting many places including the Scandinavian countries. In England, he was the guest of Lord Dudley—with whom he went on a motor tour through the Lake Districts and Scotland. In 1941, on the death of the ruler of the State, he left Limbdi. Since then he has been mostly staying at Madanapalle—contributing occasional poems and articles to newspapers and periodicals. He is also engaged in an important literary activity—research work on the *Rigveda*. Very recently he has joined the Ayurvedic Samstha at Jamnagar.

Mr. Krishnamurti has published four volumes of poems, and the fifth one—*The Ships of Truth*—is awaiting publication. His poetry, deservedly, has received wide appreciation in the Press, both in

India and England. Mr. Krishnamurti is modest, and is "not overkeen to figure in any anthology made in this country." But can this "poet of the front rank" be left out in this volume? *The Times Literary Supplement*, London, complimented him on his "mellifluous mastery of the English tongue," while the late Sir Brajendranath Seal found his poetic perception as well as his expression to be "of a very high order." He is indeed the happy possessor of a subtle imagination and a delicate poetic speech with the help of which he leaps from fact to fancy, from reality to dream, and back again to fact and reality, with splendid animation—weaving the while a quivering web of living pictures. Many are the themes on which he sings, and facile is the manner in which he does it. His sonnets and lyrics are exquisite little cameos, beaming with thought and bubbling with beauty. An Indian to the core, he writes often on subjects relating to this land. But he is an internationalist, too, on account of his wide travel, and writes with equal familiarity of Turkestan and Samarkand, Strumboli and the Grand Canal. Whatever theme he chooses, he has the gift of infusing into it a rich poetic vitality. Mr. Krishnamurti is definitely a "poet of the front rank"—a poet of the band—the band of singers who sing because they must.]

## TO THE FIGHTER COMMAND

(Written during the "Battle of Britain")

Angelic hordes that ride your sky-borne cars,  
    Surpassing the old gods you live and move,  
    Armed with severer thunders than of Jove;  
And when you die, you die like falling stars!

Not yours the quest for ease and length of days,  
    Which others share with turtles and with gods;  
    But you go seeking, at whatever odds,  
To meet your foe upon the skyey ways!

O brave knights-errant of the airy realm,  
    For ever on the watch to drive away  
The foul envenomed Eagle who would whelm  
    Your Island, having ravaged lesser prey—

Not all the bluster of his wings can fright  
Or overawe your dedicated might!

## THE WAGON

Like a fond bride, the Wagon woos  
The bullock's strength  
Along the length  
Of mile on mile of weary road.  
But her caresses leave a bruise  
And all her love is one relentless load.  
With appetite that never palls  
She galls  
The downy neck and silken flanks.  
And when her lord is old with withered shanks  
And stumbles in his traces,  
She will put on a dab of paint  
And gild her graces.  
(Her axle-creakings with new grease made faint,)  
And take a youngling love with dewy eyes  
Between her ancient shafts and pin him there,  
Till he in turn is cast for a new prize,  
Stronger and debonair.

## THE HARIJAN

We have branded him outcaste, untouchable,  
We have smeared God's holy image with shame,  
We that proffer worship to unheeding stones  
With chanting and swinging of camphor-flame !

We look on his body with loathing and scorn,  
Regarding his touch more soiling than mire;  
Yet he it is purges and renders us pure,  
Ay, cleanses us even as water or fire.

Patient and forgiving like as the Earth,  
With his burthen of sorrow he walks his way—  
As the Earth that bore us and feeds us still,  
Though we spurn and defile her everyday.

God pity our souls and forgive us our crime,  
That have trodden like filth on a fellow-folk;  
God pity our souls and revoke his doom  
That condemned us to bear the stranger's yoke.

## A P R A Y E R

(For a little child who was about to become blind.)

A sinless child, pure like the white  
Star of the evening skies,—  
O God ! why quench the tender light  
That burns within his eyes ?

●  
Thou whose love hath with countless suns  
Lit this dark world and damp,  
Bereave not a frail little house  
Of its frail little lamp.

# 19. ARMANDO MENEZES

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[If you are one of those who believe that pedagogy and poetry go ill together, read the verses of this distinguished professor and come to a different conclusion. Born at S. Mathias, Goa, on the 11th May 1902, he graduated from St. Xavier's College, Bombay, in 1924 and 1928, securing the Duke of Edinborough Scholarship and Chancellor's Gold Medal, respectively. For fifteen years afterwards he lectured at the same College—earning the high appreciation of students. He is now doing his sixth year in the Bombay Educational Service—as Professor of English at the Karnatak College, Dharwar. His published literary work includes—two volumes of poems, a long satire in verse, a Mock-epic, and a social Comedy. He has also published many poems, satirical-humorous sketches, critical sketches and social essays in various magazines. Some of these are likely to be published shortly in volume form. Many appreciative critiques of his poetry by different writers have appeared in important newspapers and journals. He, however, enjoys the unique distinction of not sending his poems to distinguished persons in India or abroad ! But why should he ? His poetry does not stand in need of secret solicitation or personal canvassing ! A splendid feast of striking beauty and quivering song—his poetry offers a standing invitation to all those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. You may scan, if you please, the skilful metrical spell-weaving of Prof. Menezes ; or behold his thoughts 'winging through the night of unborn generations'—laden with fire and fragrance. Whatever aspect of his poetry you choose to examine, you will not fail to be struck with a feeling of genuine wonder and admiration. The pithy prefaces to his two published volumes of verses are Prof. Menezes' poetic manifestoes—and reveal how profound his poetic ideal is. Chords and discords, chaos and dancing stars—all yield their secret to him. And it is with the help of these enchanted discoveries that he fashions miracles of scent and sound and hue—poem-pearls of inestimable worth.]

## ODE TO BEAUTY

O Mistress of my Vision, Loveliness !

Whom once upon a Himalayan peak

Of fiery life I felt, like some great dawn,

Bathing my soul's unstarry nakedness



With soothing benediction ! Still I seek  
Thy splendour that so momentary shone  
For me, irrevocable, waiting still  
For thine elusive glimmer on some hard-won hill.

Not brief has been my pious pilgrimage  
To thee, O Goddess, whom by day and night  
I have sought unwearied, busy or at rest,  
Through hieroglyph of many a charmed page,  
Burning to thee the late and studious light  
And incense of much bitter love; my breast  
Has been thy gorgeous altar, lit with gleams  
Of tapered thoughts and dewy flowers of wreathed dreams.

Behold ! I have built for thee a secret shrine  
Where the mind's long and garish corridors  
End, and dim mystic shadows haunt the soul !  
There have I knelt and poured the flowing wine  
Of my rich years, even as the sunset pours  
His bleeding guerdon on earth's gaudy bowl.  
Alas ! no voice made answer to my prayer :  
The echoing shrine was empty and the altar bare.

Oft in the lap of Nature have I found thee  
'At dawn or sunset or, at twilight hour,  
Flitting across the mystery haunted air;  
Or dancing, with a moonbeam girdle round thee  
Among thy stellar choristers—a power  
Half-glimpsed, half-guessed, but taunting everywhere :  
Now flaunting in a rose's saucy bloom,  
Now murmuring, secret, in a wood's romantic gloom.

I have seen thy phantom scurrying through the palms  
On some hot noonday, like a rustic elf,  
When the brown climber's cry had ceased to wound  
The palm-grove's ancient elemental calms :  
Far travesty of thy resplendent self,  
Like a swan's shadow on the waters swooned.  
And I have dreamed the whole warm aftertime,  
Nor heard the climbers cry nor seen the criers climb.

And when the South has blown his clarion call  
To marshal June's grey-suited regiments,  
And lewd Monsoon loud rages through their din,  
Decolletè and dishevelled Bacchanal—  
I have seen thee lift a corner of thy tent's  
Cloud-canvas, like an arch purdanashin,  
And drop upon the gloomed earth awhile  
The tantalizing benediction of thy smile.

Or on cool eves, lone-seated in a barque,  
With brain deep-drowsed by the lapping surge,  
I have dreamed thee walking on the wrinkled wave,  
Footing with agile foot the approaching dark  
To faery broidage—till the river's verge  
Was vocal with quick rustles and the grave  
Long buzz of gnats alarmed the sleepy rush,  
Ere the Night's ultimate and constellated hush.

I have looked for thee in woman's tender eyes,  
Sounding if yet within those shadowy pools  
I caught the luminous lotus of thy Vision . . .  
I found a serpent in my paradise :  
Exiled from Eden by its rigid rules,  
I knew how bitter is the world's derision.  
Must thou, O Goddess, test thy worshippers  
Unalchemizing every blessing to a curse ?

I have sought thee on the lips of innocence,  
Gazing on childhood's calm and wondering grace,  
Feeling its flesh of roses white and pink . . .  
Alas ! my longing, far transcending sense,  
Must climb to conscious Soul, and give the chase  
To complex Vision till, the Spirit's brink  
Attained, the panting hunter makes a pause  
Upon the contemplation of his own deep laws.

They told me thou wert oftenest wont to dwell  
Where thine own dedicated hierophants  
Caught thee in webs of colour and of line :  
Where some dead Angelo or Rafael

Stained canvas with his dreams; or in soft chants  
Or fierce—intoxicating like strong wine :  
Mild evening song, Beethoven's moonlight wonder,  
Or wild Valkyries' ride through lightning and through thunder.

Alas ! thou mockest us with bitter jest,  
O Loveliness, who whettest mortal thirst  
With wine immortal, barred to living lips,  
From grapes celestial by the angels prest.  
Or would'st thou lure us where immense lawns burst  
With daisied laughter and the soul-bee sips,  
Faint-murmurous within its fragrant close,  
The unexhausted nectar of the Mystic Rose ?

Oh ! if thy cold ironic coquetry  
Is but the devious method of thy Grace,  
That thy lone votaries may learn to climb  
Thy Vision's ladder each divine degree,  
Here I, thine eremite, adjure to efface  
The painted idols of my vaulted prime,  
Unswear—proud heretic ! my haughty years  
For thy sharp discipline of sacrificial tears.

Or, if thy gifts are, cruel Loveliness,  
Enfeoffed to Death, and all thy lovers must  
Pass that pale portal ere they can attain  
The contemplation of thy nakedness ;  
If thy white lily feeds on dungy dust  
And final glory asks for final pain :  
Destroy me now, with death or with derision,  
So may I see thy face. O Mistress of my Vision.

## ASPIRATION

I think I could be,  
A clod of earth,  
God's mystery  
Of birth ;

A vulgar clod  
Calm with the trust  
Bestowed by God  
On dust.

The shadow of cloud  
And the sun's beams  
Would be my proud  
Far dreams.

•  
- And I would, waking  
One sudden morn,  
Feel my heart aching  
With corn ;

Feel a great thirst  
Within me strain  
Towards heaven aburst  
With rain . . .

The glory of rainfall  
The dust should wed,  
That a few have all  
Men's bread.

## WAY AND GOAL

Two parallel tracks of steel,  
On each a train :  
Child, could you ever feel  
Their pain,

The lonely-aching loss  
When they are faring  
On parallel tracks, and cross  
Despairing !

Two throbbing pulses burning  
Each towards each ;  
Two lonely lovers yearning  
To reach

The inevitable goal  
Which, like these trains,  
In opposite ways the soul  
Attains.

# 20. NIZAMAT JUNG BAHADUR

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[Moulvi Nizamuddin Ahmed (Nawab Sir Nizam Jung Bahadur) was born at Hyderabad (Deccan) on 22nd April 1871 of aristocratic parents—and is still happily with us. Having his early education at home, he attended for sometime the Madrasa-e-Alizza, and then passed the Matriculation Examination of the Madras University at the age of thirteen. He proceeded to England in the Jubilee year, 1887, entered Trinity College, Cambridge, the next year, secured the B.A. and LL.B. Degrees in 1891, and four years later was called to the Bar from the Inner Temple—when he was barely twenty-four years old. Two years after his return to India, he enrolled himself at the Madras High Court. In 1897 he joined Hyderabad State Service—in which his father also had distinguished himself earlier—as Assistant Home Secretary. From now onwards his official career was a rising one, Sir Nizam holding different responsible posts—under-secretary of the Legislative Council, High Court Judge, Chief Justice. In 1929 he retired from service as Political Member—having held that post since 1919. For his splendid services to the State and for his loyalty to the Empire, he was made an O.B.E., in 1918, and received the decoration of C.I.E., in 1924. He was Knighted in 1929.

One of the many memorable things about Sir Nizam is the fact that he never allowed his routine official work to interfere with his literary tastes and work. Precocious from childhood, he acquired proficiency in the Classics, and an abiding interest in English and Persian literatures. And all this he has used to advantage in writing poetry. He has published three slim volumes of poems. A selection from these under the title *Islamic Poems* (1934) was edited by Mr. Zahir Ahmed. A new volume of poems—*Rural Lyrics*—with a charming get-up is shortly to be published. Sir Nizam has with him some unpublished works—*Sonnets and Lyrical Poems*, and *War Poems* (about a hundred, written between 1908-9 and the present year.) The first thing that strikes a reader of Sir Nizam's poetry is its scrupulous craftsmanship. Sonnets, odes, lyrics, narrative poems—in all these he shows himself as a master of correct versification. This by itself is no small achievement. But Sir Nizam's greater achievement is in the thought-content of his poetry. More subjective than objective, he often fills his poems with effusions of deep personal feeling and experience. Not just fanciful, his ideas and thoughts have a striking philosophical and even mystical value. Especially in his poems where he writes of such profound themes as

Beauty, Love, Truth, Light and Nature—Sir Nizamut is at his best and brightest. He writes as one who has deeply pondered some of the fundamental problems of the here and the hereafter, and as one who has genuine poetic inspiration. I understand that Mr. Zahir Ahmed, B.A., H.C.S., Deputy Revenue Secretary, Hyderabad State, is working on a biography of Sir Nizamut under the title—*Life's Yesterdays*. It will be in the fitness of things if he devotes at least one critical chapter to the poetry and other literary work of this distinguished octogenarian.]

## IDEAL BEAUTY

As one who wanders lone, and wearily,  
Through desert tracts of silence and of night  
Pining for love's keen utterance, and for light,  
And chasing shadowy forms that mock and flee—  
My soul was wandering through Eternity  
Seeking within the depths, and on the height  
Of Being one with whom it might unite  
In life and love and immortality—

When lo ! She stood beside me, whom I'd sought  
•With dying hope through life's decaying years—  
A Form, a Spirit, human, yet divine.  
Love gave her eyes the light of Heaven and taught  
Her lips the mystic music of the Spheres.  
Our beings met—I felt her soul in mine !

## SPIRIT OF LIGHT

Spirit of Light, from starry mansions straying,  
Whose flight is o'er this world of woe and strife,  
On, on thy course, to mortal hearts conveying  
God's meaning of the mystery of life !

On, on thy course, wide-scattering from each pinion  
Sparks that shall leave behind a trail of fire  
To guide mankind from passion's dire dominion  
To purer heavens of the soul's desire ;

To cheer them, toil-worn, weary and benighted,  
With Heaven-born hope pure as the Dawn's first ray ;  
To gladden them in Sorrow's gloom affrighted  
With thy sure promise of Eternal Day !

O, sing to them thy song of hope and gladness,  
Dispel all sombre shadows from the air,  
Till freed-from dismal doubt and fear and sadness,  
The heart of man shall deem the world more fair !

Bare to the skies in its unsullied brightness  
The keen edge of thy spirit-tempered blade,  
Held in that hand aloft, whose radiant whiteness  
The Lord of Light hath His own symbol made !

# 21. NILIMA DEVI

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[This Sreemathi—who was born at Calcutta in 1903—has ‘made history’ in her own way! She had no school or college education, possesses no University degree, and yet writes exquisite poetry in English—which will put to shame similar efforts by some of our degreed men! And then, she not only writes poetry—but paints and writes articles to the press on such varied subjects as literature, meteorology and pre-historic scripts and women’s problems. And she is the first Indian woman to take up advertising as a career! She is now ‘Account Executive’ of the Calcutta office of Messrs D. J. Keymer & Co., Ltd., the well-known advertising agency. Further, in her private capacity, she is a partner of the Signet Press which, in the course of a few months of its inception, has revolutionised the tradition of the publicity trade in India. Nilima Devi’s book of poems—*When the Moon Died*—published only a few months ago—is a living proof of what wonders can be done in printing and publishing if persons with artistic taste take to them. Sreemathi Nilima Devi is no prosaic ‘business-woman’, but a person with an inner aesthetic urge which she wants to translate into concrete shape. Her father, the late Lalit Mohun Danerji, a judge of the Allahabad High Court, had no faith in the real cultural value of school and collegiate education. And so young Nilima had the alternative good fortune of studying deeply under a bevy of tutors. And with her love of speed and dash—she soon acquired culture—which indeed is her dominant characteristic today. Her speed ‘mania’ manifested itself in another direction, too. Young ‘Tom-boy’ Nilima was an absolute terror to the traffic-police whenever and wherever she went in her car! Her next test for speed was to have been in the air, but this ambition crashed as the helmet had to make way for the wedding-veil!

Polished and cultured, Sreemathi Nilima Devi has praiseworthy proficiency in her fine arts—painting and poetry. She paints usually in water colours, but her passion is for tempera. Her favourite style is Oriental—although she is alive to the trends of modern art. She confesses that some of the most thrilling moments of her life were spent in the art galleries of Europe and America where she had the opportunity of studying the works of modern masters. As for her poetry, her two published volumes speak eloquently for themselves. Though she began her literary career at the early age of twelve with a story, she has cultivated a special aptitude for writing poetry. And in poetry, she is as individualistic as she is in life. The painter in her is evident in her poetry too—for her



poems are essentially pictures—some concrete and colourful, some abstract and vague—some in water-colours, some in tempera ! Free of canons and conventions, of formulae and formalities—she writes spontaneously, daringly and vibrantly. At the same time, her poetry is suffused with a tender grace that is essentially feminine, a romanticism that revels in revealing unexpected visions, and with a feeling of wonder that is born of a true poetic temperament. There is no use comparing the poetry of Nilima Devi with that of Toru Dutt or Sarojini Naidu or Bharati Sarabhai; it exists by itself—a thing of delicious beauty and a source of inspiration to others. There is no doubt that Sreemathi Nilima Devi is a distinguished member of the band of Indo-English Singers !]

## THE LADY OF THE NIGHT

Around me is the silence of the night,  
Alone, beside the window I sit ;  
Through a white window frame  
I see a curtain of rich dark velvet,  
Patterned by spear-tips of shimmering light—  
Stars, that gleam on an ink-dark sky.

Before me stands a vase,  
Filled with white-petalled roses,  
Half-unfurled, pure and virginal, silver-white.  
I sense the presence of something—  
Warm and sensuous with fragrance ;  
She caresses me,  
The Lady of the Night.

The Lady glides in through the window ;  
In the soft star-light I discern,  
The beauty of her proud dark face.  
Unfathomable pools of mystery—her eyes.  
Her unbraided curls brush my face  
Like the fluttering wings of a frightened moth.

In a husky voice she whispers to me,  
Of dreams half-forgotten, of delights still untasted,  
Of might-have-beens that still might be,  
Of fruition, never of frustration.  
From the depths of silence,  
To me, alone  
She whispers,  
The Lady of the Night.

## THIS, OUR LIFE !

Imprisoned from the very hour of our birth,  
Through the closed windows of our mortal frame,  
We gaze at the high walls of outward circumstance,  
Bearing, nonetheless, in each the spark of perfection  
To be kindled some day into a full flame.

What would we be, were we not what we are ?

Were we not thus preoccupied with a continuity  
Of our meagre lives in our children,  
And the perpetual dread of some future dissolution ?

Individuality ? Intellect ?

Better, indeed, for the soul to float in timeless, spaceless night  
Bathing in the peace of soft, silken, star-powdered dark,  
Gathering the while all the dreams that lie scattered in space,  
Than to languish in the prison-house day after day,  
By the pale, flickering light of our uncertain intellect,  
And pine away in the cobwebs of flesh and fiction.

The Soul ? The Spirit ?

Like a caged bird it beats its luminous wings  
Against the prison bars of the frame of clot and clay,  
Till one unexpected hour releases it from its bondage.  
Call you that Death ? But, surely not the end ;  
For, there is no end to life.

Drink deep, then, of the cup of life, accepting  
The dark as well as the light in this our brief passage on earth ;  
Say in full-hearted joy : ' I am, I remain.  
In every growing manifestation of life, I am ;  
I sprout with the spring flowers ;  
I sing the spring-song of the world that is and to be ;  
I dance with the sunlight on the tree-tops ;  
And moonbeams on the sands of the seashore ;  
I soar high on the fleecy clouds in the illimitable blue ;  
I am Life ; its beginning and its end. I remain.'

# 22. DILIP KUMAR ROY

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[Robed in saffron garments, with a child-like face beaming with an inner spiritual ecstasy, with poetry in his blood, music in his throat and ever a song on his lips, and with a rare devotion to the higher life of the spirit—forty-seven-year old Dilip Kumar Roy is a person to reckon with, a person with a brilliant past and a radiant future. Son of the late Dwijendralal Roy—Sri Dilip was born at Calcutta in January 1897—heir to distinguished traditions in literature and music. He graduated from the Calcutta University in 1918 with First Class Honours in Mathematics. Later, at Cambridge, he took Part One (Mathematics Tripos) and Part One (Music Special). His early love for singing still persisting, he then went over to Germany and took a course of voice-training for eight months. Returning to India in 1922, he toured the country extensively—lecturing on music and musicians. But this activity did not satisfy him much. He found life out of joint and moving in a meaningless routine. In that mood of frustration—he suddenly discovered a ray of hope in the Yogashram of Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry, and went over to that place dedicating his all to the Master and his cause. It was here that Sri Dilip was initiated not only into the secrets of the Spirit but also into the mysteries and delights of English metres and rhythms with all their intricate charm and appeal. And the encouragement and inspiration of the Master helped Sri Dilip to burst into fluent verse in English. A bachelor, he finally renounced his ordinary life and possessions in 1928, and became a permanent disciple of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram—a *bhakta* and a *sadhaka*. And he has been there at that focal centre of spiritual life—pursuing the path of higher life and deeper thought, singing songs and composing poems in English and Bengali.

Sri Dilip Roy's literary work in Bengali and English is of fine characteristic quality. In Bengali he has published two volumes of verses—*Anami* and *Suryamukhi*—acclaimed by many as treading new ground. His *Diary of a Roamer* in Bengali is a book on music—the first of its kind in India. In English, a novel of his—*Cross Currents*—was published in serial form in the now defunct *Orient* of Bombay. A volume of poems in English with the suggestive title—*Gleams and Sparkles* is expected to be published shortly. The most dominant characteristic of Sri Dilip Roy's poetry—in Bengali as well as in English—is its intense spirituality. A disciple of Sri Aurobindo, Sri Dilip Roy is deeply influenced by his Master's thought and expression. Yet he has a striking individuality of his own in

both these respects—and writes from his own deep personal experience. This experience being new to many, makes them think that Sri Dilip Roy's poetry revels in recondite thought and esoteric philosophy. This is a false impression. The philosophy in Sri Dilip Roy's poetry is the essential higher thought that every profound poet possesses, and must possess. No poetry is ever great unless it is suffused with mellow philosophic emotion. And this is what exactly Sri Dilip Roy's poetry contains. It is not mystical in the loose sense of the word, nor is it abstruse and vague. Deriving their inspiration from the significant spiritual renaissance he experienced, his poems are flowers of rare fragrance. Mated to this, is Sri Dilip's gift of infusing into his poems rich colour-suggestions and musical effects. Sri Dilip's poetry is the poetry of faith, of purity, of devotion and surrender—the poetry that enriches mind and soul—the poetry that wafts the human spirit into the highlands of life!]

## THE NEW ADVENT

A wide expanse of liquid grey....a shimmer  
On the horizon of some amber clouds....  
Between the dusk-enveloped twigs a glimmer  
Of an eager planet wrestling with the shrouds

Woven by Nature on the looms of eve....  
The supine sea-scape hums a monotone  
Of apathy that would not even receive  
The joy of phosphorescence as its own....

A sudden moon-rise, haloed with lambent gold....  
A sudden sighing of the boughs....slow heaves  
Of darkling waters to the manifold  
Loveliness rained by dwindling light on leaves

And flowers and creepers pining for delight—  
Then the answer rings out to the ancient cry  
Of loneliness and Beauty quells the blight  
Of shadows, sounding lunar conches on high.

A sudden victory, yet how swift, complete  
And wondrous!—it would seem an angel train  
Sieged in a mood of magic, passing sweet :  
A new Advent through night when daytimes wane !

A moment mere, an adventitious gleam,  
A fleeting glance aslant of the infant moon,  
A whiff from the heights and lo, doom yields to dream!....  
A Star's rebirth when olden rushlights swoon !

Would it not be even so with soul's sunrise  
(On the crest of Life's clouds, pallid, commonplace)  
Spurring our listlessness to the enterprise  
Miraculous of a new-born consciousness

Of diamond glinting out from the heart of cinder,  
Of sleep ensouling slumbers girt by gloom,  
Of the bliss incredible in all-surrender  
To the All who builds Love's pantheon on hate's tomb !

13. IX. 1943.

## B U D D H A ' S   F A C E

A Face of light immobilised with love  
But mobilising scattered rays of soul....  
A mountain-poise no earth-quakes ever move....  
A drop merged in the deep beyond recall !

The souġ reposes not in words nor songs,  
For these can never cross the boundary  
Of loneliness : no art can mend the wrongs  
And greeds and wars of dark disharmony,

Nor heal with balms what lusts bring in their train,  
(For Beauty, wafting echoes of Light's thrill,  
Cannot redeem what life must mar or stain)  
And so 'tis not to sound the soul would kneel,

But to a silence fecund with compassion,  
Unique yet peopled with creative fires,  
The Sleep beyond life's slumbers—stars' invasion  
In phantom haunts of glittering masked desires.

Thou art a symbol of that voiceless Grace,  
A living paradox no mind shall name :  
In the world a call to what no world can guess,  
In love a call to what no love may claim !

And yet the heart acclaims thee, thrilled, O Friend,  
As a deep avatar of life and love :  
Who shall appraise thy Face and will not bend  
In awe to what no other face can prove.

•

3. II. 1944.

## THE LESSON

Deep heart-beats of elusive Gleam  
In swirls and anarchies of Night,  
And fires that purge alloy of Life  
In crucibles of flame-delight ;

Lone ocean-moods advance in floods  
Creating coral isles with silt ;  
Ruth reigning in wrath incognito  
And crucified lone lives that built

Posthumous pantheons of Light ;  
Rich velvet softness that resides  
In adamant ; tender crooning Love  
That in tempestuous Hate abides ;

Shy Beauty's glance, eyelashed in clouds,  
Mirrored in the answering virgin gaze ;  
The fantasy of simple faith  
Plumbing thy far unfathomed ways

•

Of mystic flute-notes winning through  
Soul's gamut of pain to ecstasy :  
O baffling Sphinx of paradox,  
Initiate in humility.

Midnight  
6. IX. 1944.

## 23. BHARATI SARABHAI

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[She woke up the literary world—both here and abroad—one fine morning in 1943 and discovered to it her poetic individuality. And the discriminating public in that world, not grumbling at the unexpected demand, welcomed her with hallelujahs of praise. She wrote *The Well of the People* (a poetic play) and it, in its turn, wrote her name in the scroll of Indo-English poets. Long before the play was published, she was known to some of the reading public as a writer of short lyrics and vigorous poems in such journals as *The London Mercury* and *The Indian P.E.N.* But they were stray verses and did not help to consolidate her literary name. That the published play has done—in a memorable manner. The play, in some of its aspects, is an index of her scholarship, literary culture, poetic sensibility, national spirit, love of the real, and her interest in the Peoples' Theatre Movement. That her tastes are so varied does not come as a surprise to those who know something of her early career. Daughter of the well-known mill-magnate of Ahmedabad, Sri Ambalal Sarabhai, she was born in July 1912. All her early education she received from special private tutors. She went to College at the age of fifteen, and after four years secured the B.A. degree with First Class Honours in English from the Bombay University in 1933. Later, she took 'Modern Grates' at the Oxford University and graduated in 1936.

But these academic distinctions are the least part of Sreemathi Bharati Sarabhai's intellectual and cultural equipment. She began her literary career early—with no 'theory' of writing. At that time she had hardly read any of the modern living poets; had, indeed, a bias against them. She was most at peace with the early Romantics; and Shelley and Keats she particularly loved. And she wrote without any formal standards because she felt that beauty and form did not necessarily be in regular rhyme and metre and that in the organism of form and substance one could not lay down a law of *a priori*. While in England she read the works of modern poets—Eliot, Auden, Spender—and she became an admirer of their freedom from mental and expressional verbiage, their attempt to try other and less frayed modes of expression, their exploration of the possibilities of everyday language, and of the 'real,' and 'significant' nature of the experience dealt with by them. It is possible that she may have been influenced to some extent by the methods of these writers, but she does not follow any one in particular. Disliking poetry of 'escape' and 'seclusion' because it arises out of a

narrow personal life, she believes that a writer must lead a significant and synthetic life with the rest of the world—in order to get meaning out of experience and to express it adequately. She expresses her ideal thus: “To satisfy his social conscience the artist must both serve as an ordinary unit for a cause which is more than himself and express his vital experience so gathered in a form of art whose technique he has mastered. If I could serve India actively as Huxley would have each citizen do in his *Ends and Means*, and if I could adequately express in some literary form the value of various aspects of the Indian renaissance which I had so gathered, I should be content with my goal.” *The Well of the People* is an illustration of Sreemathi Bharati Sarabhai’s literary ideal. This poetic play—details of which need not be given here—has a new theme as well as a new technique—in both of which the authoress has shown surprising individuality. This newness and individuality may surprise and even shock those unacquainted with modernist tendencies in literature, but it has already won the recognition of discriminating writers like T. S. Eliot, Edmund Blunden, E. M. Foster, Nicholas Roerich and Tagore. Rabindranath welcomed the play as “a rich cargo of poems . . . full of shining surprises and images that are fresh and genuine. It is from this rich cargo that some Choruses are presented here. They are, I believe, typical of Sreemathi Bharati Sarabhai’s poetry, and of the new vision and new technique that she has brought into Indo-English poetry. The individuality that she has shown and the recognition that she has already won are happy preludes to more fragrant laurels awaiting Sreemathi Bharatiben.]

## CHORUSES FROM—*The Well of the People*.

### H A R I D W A R A

#### I

Now Haridwar is heaving with the heat and blood of men.

For days men and these

women, with what love we can

reckon not, whirl without cease

in railway lines’ confluent iron streams—barred out or barred in.

And bursting this century’s dam with shouts, have washed out  
the old round-pebbled market,

new-rich, martyr’s square,

sandalwood brackets

on panel and gate, camel-high roof seats on house and tree.



The whole town is as smoke and smoking from cauldrons the stone  
current  
    in dry virgin wood ;  
    Time is recurrent,  
    so quiet they have stood  
eyeless, in goddess-unflickering gaze, for vision to be.

Young mothers from Punjab, with what life-joy we know not,  
    have sat on the road  
    in absent mood, caught  
    like pitchers down-necked  
emptying emptying their breast to sons velvet-waisted,  
    who, sated, knot their mother-bodice—

Now what is she winking at so merrily, as if their envy  
    could hardly keep down  
    her fun, her gaiety—  
    old women from town  
are knocked flat on the ground but cry not nor show surprise.

They have herded without fear, the women's lowered heads,  
    the austere staff,  
    fierce northern beards  
    and little children's laugh,  
and half aware, for the air is man-thick, have garnered night-long  
hours together.

Countrywide the devout have come, carried their large families,  
    wives with sprightly wits  
    and small, hidden babies  
    and soft glossy spirits.  
The sacred river has become a bed for all, enough a bundle and  
pitcher.

\* \* \* \* \*

Here Sur Ganga, more than any sea, is a flowing mine of waters  
    for our arduous pineland  
    of daring prayer-chanters ;  
    she is your lovers' fountain  
and life prisoner's sentence, a recurring waterfall :

Here, after the shut-in cold of the fierce mountain  
    is the piercing thrill  
    of the outside moon ;  
    from far Kumao's hill  
throne to low plains of penance ; slow terraces by Himalaya's  
wall :

Here glow-worms from heard-of poems, scatter the hermit's pot  
    like sonorous stars  
    falling but fall not ;  
    and neutral night jars  
plaintive mark, untired unwatered, hours they cannot feel :

Here by world-swift whirling pool, emerald moss-held  
    **maya-kunda**, I  
    lies Ganga's pure mirror ;  
    **bakul, vanjul**, wounded  
    flowers by silent river ;  
while bird anchorites, **saras** shy **hamsa**, burn, turn quicken  
sicken round **maya-kunda** : II

Here shadows of trees lean across the road to whisper  
    to real **pippali** leaves, **nivar** grass ;  
    and yonder, over vesper—  
    vibrant juniper copse,  
come figures thin, stalking in **bhagava** like storks alone : III

Birds are quiet ; shadows are still ; the slim **sisam** abode IV  
    is eternal spring  
    for the will branching  
    in wilderness—god !  
All life someone spreads out his solitary soul here, his psyche's  
drone.

\* \* \* \* \*

At last rising the moon wakes on her wind-flooded head,  
    shakes the showering **shirisha** free,  
    looks round crouching on branch-held  
    feet, and now from the tree-  
side, a-liquid, she shakes her head limpid dazzling free.

And with her head, her head, startled the whole mountain head,  
    austeres Rishiksha jag,  
    its bush crystalline horned,  
    like a gigantic stag  
is starting ; stars are running and planets falling

The moon is blue and Himavant mountain is shaking  
    for the full full-moon  
    that is rising ; and waking  
    from their vigil, soon  
the bathers will be leaving, O they have ached for her,  
    long this after-sun awaiting,  
    long this after-sun awaiting.

## II

They dip, they dip, V  
    Wind is bladed,  
    River wrinkled,  
    Her breast shrunken.

They dip, they dip,  
    Without the moon,  
    Your night is moan,  
    Light inviolate.

•                      •                      •  
Rise, Moon, rise on river VI  
While garment is red,  
Scarlet her forehead,  
Love's bangle unshed.  
Brave moon, join with her,  
Cool on flank of her,  
Her waist-knot loosened  
Like garland in wind.

•                      •                      •  
They dip, they dip,  
    Waiting the moon.  
Stay, stay, O woman  
On river's lip  
For sleep will come  
And hang the moon  
And soon, too soon  
Your will be done.

AT THE HARIDWARA *Kumbha Mela*  
April, 1938.

## NOTES

Haridwāra, (literally “the door of the Lord”), in the north-west of India, is one of the most famous places of Hindu pilgrimage. The river Gangā (Ganges) comes down from the Himalaya and begins her long course across the eastern continental plain from there. At Rishiksha, a little distance from Haridwāra, is a hermitage of monks and they live in an evergreen wood of sisam trees.

• There are references here to the scenes at Haridwāra, at the time of a *kumbha mela* when a great gathering of pilgrims collects there.

I. *Maya kunda*, literally “the pool of infatuation,” is the name to the Gangā just before she flows into Rishiksha.

II. *Sarasa*, *Hamsa*, are the Sanskrit names for the stork and the swan.

III. *Bhagava* is the saffron robe of the ascetic.

IV. *Sisam*, name of the trees in the wood at Rishiksha.

V. “*They dip, they dip*,” refers to the group of bathers waiting on the bank to make their dip into the sacred river at the time of the long predicted auspicious position of the solar constellation.

VI. “*Rise, Moon, rise on river, while garment is red*,” etc. The red garment, the vermilion mark on the forehead, the bangle in the hand, are some of the signs of the happily married Hindu woman. Girls use the same decorations.

# 24. SAROJINI NAIDU

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[Who has not heard of this queen of our minstrel throng—this singer of beautiful songs—this dreamer of matchless dreams—this song-bird with a broken wing—this sceptred flute of Indo-English poetry—this fire-brand of our political life—this woman with wonderful gifts ? Almost all the important dates and details of her life are as well known to the public as her multifarious activities. That she was born at Hyderabad (Deccan) on 13th February 1879, in the distinguished Chattopadhyaya family, that she passed the Matriculation examination of the Madras University at the early age of twelve, that a year earlier she wrote a long narrative poem of thirteen-hundred lines in imitation of *The Lady of the Lake* and a drama of two thousand lines, and all this when she was confined to bed with illness, that she went to England in 1895 and studied first at King's College, London, and then at Girton, Cambridge, that she returned to India three years afterwards owing to illness, that she married in the same year—'breaking through the bonds of caste'—Dr. Major M. G. Naidu, an Andhra, that since 1920 she has been a staunch patriot and lieutenant of Mahatma Gandhi—welcoming and bearing with fortitude the rigours of prison life, that she was President of the Indian National Congress held at Cawnpore, that she is one of the most powerful speakers and one of the most dominant personalities in the political and public life of this country—all these are facts which are known to all. And that she is a poetess of established international reputation, that three volumes of her verse have been published—for two of which three are valuable and revealing introductions by Sir Edmund Gosse and Arthur Symonds, that she has not published any poems for the last twenty years nearly due to her pre-occupation with politics—these too are known to many, though not in great detail. What more remains to be said then ?

Mrs. Naidu is almost the first Indo-English singer to have wide reputation—both here and abroad. And that is because of two prominent characteristics of her poetry. She is first and foremost a melodist of high order—using nothing but winged words and making even ordinary words sound musical by placing them in peculiar contexts. Combined with this is the pure Indian complexion of her poetry. Thanks to the timely advice of Edmund Gosse, she turned her attention to Indian themes, and has interpreted the heart of our country in her poems. The festivals and faiths, the customs and traditions, the flowers and the bazaars, the aspects and

events of life, the fishers and the dancers, the palanquin-bearers and bangle-sellers—all these she writes of are entirely Indian. It is as such that India lies revealed poetically and picturesquely in her poetry. There are those who find fault with Mrs. Naidu for being romantic and not realistic, for being interesting and not representative—in her poetry. What complaint this—that misses the point? Her poetry is what she herself is, what environment and temperament have made her—a tapestry of romantic colouring with quivering threads of gold. Have only realistic and representative poems value and not others? No,—such fault-finding is beside the mark. Mrs. Naidu's poetry has helped India to be understood better—both here and abroad, and that itself is an estimable service through song. Her poetry, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, has “qualities which make her best work exquisite, unique and unmatched in its kind.” She is a poet born, a singer by divine birth-right. Her place on the Indian Parnassus is as high as it is permanent. And if reports from reliable persons are not wrong, Mrs. Naidu has several unpublished poems which, when they see the light of day, may reveal new aspects of her work and take her to greater heights !]

## PALANQUIN - BEARERS

Lightly, O lightly, we bear her along,  
She sways like a flower in the wind of our song ;  
She skims like a bird on the foam of a stream,  
She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream.  
Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,  
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

Softly, O softly we bear her along,  
She hangs like a star in the dew of our song ;  
She springs like a beam on the brow of the tide,  
She falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride.  
Lightly, O lightly we glide and we sing,  
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

## COROMANDEL FISHERS

Rise, brothers, rise, the wakening skies pray to the morning light,  
The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn like a child that  
has cried all night.  
Come, let us gather our nets from the shore, and set our  
*catamarans* free,  
To capture the leaping wealth of the tide, for we are the sons  
of the sea.

No longer delay, let us hasten away in the track of the sea-gull's  
call,  
The sea is our mother, the cloud is our brother, the waves are  
our comrades all.  
What though we toss at the fall of the sun where the hand of  
the sea-god drives ?  
He who holds the storm by the hair, will hide in his breast our  
lives.

Sweet is the shade of the cocoanut glade, and the scent of the  
mango grove,  
And sweet are the sands at the full o' the moon with the sound  
of the voices we love.  
But sweeter, O brothers, the kiss of the spray and the dance of  
the wild foam's glee ;  
Row, brothers, row to the blue of the verge, where the low sky  
mates with the sea.

## INDIAN DANCERS

Eyes ravished with rapture, celestially panting,  
what passionate bosoms aflaming with fire  
Drink deep of the hush of the hyacinth heavens  
that glimmer around them in fountains of light ;  
O wild and entrancing the strain of keen music  
that cleaveth the stars like a wail of desire,  
And beautiful dancers with houri-like faces  
bewitch the voluptuous watches of night.

The scents of red roses and sandalwood flutter and die  
in the maze of their gem-tangled hair,  
And smiles are entwining like magical serpents the  
poppies of lips that are opiate-sweet ;  
Their glittering garments of purple are burning  
like tremulous dawns in the quivering air,  
And exquisite, subtle and slow are the tinkle and  
tread of their rhythmical, slumber-soft feet.

Now silent, now singing and swaying and swinging  
like blossoms that bend to the breezes or showers,  
Now wantonly winding, they flash, now they falter,  
and, lingering, languish in radiant choir ;

Their jewel-gift arms and warm, wavering, lily-  
long fingers enchant through melodious hours,  
Eyes ravished with rapture, celestially panting,  
what passionate bosoms aflaming with fire !

## TO INDIA

O young through all thy immemorial years !  
Rise, Mother, rise, regenerate from thy gloom,  
And, like a bride high-mated with the spheres,  
Beget new glories from thine ageless womb !

The nations that in fettered darkness weep  
Crave thee to lead them where great mornings break.  
Mother, O Mother, wherefore dost thou sleep ?  
Arise and answer for thy children's sake !

Thy Future calls thee with a manifold sound  
• To crescent honours, splendours, victories vast ;  
Waken, O slumbering Mother, and be crowned,  
Who once wert empress of the sovereign Past.

## BANGLE - SELLERS

Bangle-sellers are we who bear  
Our shining loads to the temple fair....  
Who will buy these delicate, bright  
Rainbow-tinted circles of light ?  
Lustrous tokens of radiant lives,  
For happy daughters and happy wives.

Some are meet for a maiden's wrist,  
Silver and blue as the mountain-mist,  
Some are flushed like the buds that dream  
On the tranquil brow of a woodland stream ;  
Some are aglow with the bloom that cleaves  
To the limpid glory of new-born leaves.



Some are like fields of sunlit corn,  
Meet for a bride on her bridal morn,  
Some, like the flame of her marriage fire,  
Or rich with the hue of her heart's desire,  
Tinkling, luminous, tender, and clear,  
Like her bridal laughter and bridal tear.

Some are purple and gold-flecked grey,  
For her who has journeyed through life midway,  
Whose hands have cherished, whose love has blest  
And cradled fair sons on her faithful breast,  
Who serves her household in fruitful pride,  
And worships the gods at her husband's side.

# 25. BRAJENDRANATH SEAL

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[Born in 1864, this brilliant torch-bearer of cultural life died on 3rd December 1938—at the ripe old age of seventyfive. His intellectual eminence defies analysis ; his profundity refuses to be plumbed, and his versatility is too varied to be easily comprehended. Philosophy was his favourite, but he was not less keenly interested in other subjects. Poetry, criticism, literature, political theory, mathematics, chemistry—in all these was he thorough and in all these did he achieve distinction. An exemplary genius—he navigated many uncharted ways in the universe of the mind. Taking the M.A. degree in philosophy from the Calcutta University at the early age of twenty, he became professor in the City College, Calcutta. Later he was Principal of the Morris College, Nagpur, and afterwards of the Berhampore and Cooch-Bihar Colleges. In 1913 he was appointed as the first King George V Professor of Mental and Moral Science at the Calcutta University—which post he held with great distinction till 1917. In that year he became the Vice-Chancellor of the Mysore University and continued as such till 1926—when he finally retired from service. In 1899 he opened the Indian Section of the International Congress of Orientalists with his paper on “The Test of Truth.” In the History of Culture Section of the same Congress he read another paper on “Origin of Law and Hindus as Founders of Social Science.” In 1911 he opened the discussion in the International Races Congress at London with his paper on “Race Origins.” The published papers and works of the late Sir Brajendranath Seal are indeed few, and that is because, as a seeker of full-orbed perfection in every walk of life, he pursued his starward course of thought more with an inward rapture than with an outward expression.

*The Quest Eternal* of this “seer in the penance forest of Humanity”—published by the Oxford University Press in 1936—comprises three separate quests, the Ancient, the Medieval, and the Modern, and seeks to transcribe basic philosophical ideals in forms of pure poetry. The first two parts were written as far back as 1893 and the last one a few years before his demise. The whole poem—or rather series of poems—presents a vast cosmorama of immanent ideas—“the stuff of our life, the warp and the woof of our world-consciousness, iridescent instinct flashing into reflection.” The complex effect aimed at in this symphony of the ages is not lyrical intensity or *furor*, but the poise and balance of reason and imagination, of historical reality and Universal ideality. *The Quest Eternal*

is an experiment both with regard to its thought and technique. It is an expression of philosophical ideas of life and the world in forms of pure poetry. As regards the form, escaping from the conventionally unconventional, the poet reverts in large part to the classical in manner and diction, which transcends all fashions conventional on unconventional, old or new. An austere economy even to baldness is the author's constant model in expression as the only proper vehicle for this new poesy. The extract included here is taken from the third quest entitled "The Modern Ideal—A Vision of Psyche, or the Quest of Life." The Hero, a homeless wanderer, here ransacks the realm of Nature in quest of wisdom, and finds everywhere the reign absolute of the leagued Powers of brute Matter and blind sense. Nature shows him the Leviathan in convulsion.]

## NATURE UNVEILED

'Twas in a cave o'er-hung by a beetling cliff  
By a pine forest skirting northern seas ;  
There self-withdrawn I meditated deep .  
A priest I'd be of human mysteries,  
Questioning still (if haply they might yield  
This wisdom) all soul-instincts delicate  
And sensitive, all sense of super-sensibles,

Gossamer sheens, bright films, transcendencies ;  
Rare glimpses of an inner Life Etern  
Caught on that cliff beetling o'er foaming seas :

Exhilarations, flushes, buoyancies,  
Like gales that bring whiffs of the cold salt spray,  
Old Ocean's smell, smell, to the far inlander ;

The restless flashings of the Soul's horizon,  
As of charged clouds that drive before the blast,  
Or thousand glancing hammers in Life's forge  
That flames with instinct's subterranean fires ;

The clair-obscure of the Soul's polar night .  
With far-heard breakers of an open sea  
Booming beyond the great Ice Barrier ;

Sun-birth of Truth from the Godhead of Truth,  
Transcendent Vision on the mountain top  
Quickening the Soul's wings with a Phæton's fury,  
Whose conscious ether burns empyreal ;

Or Fancy's twilight cloudlands through which stray  
Phantoms of many-mooded glooms and glares,  
Laughing in madness, listening or a-stare  
To catch the intermittent flash or roll ;  
Or Beauty's myriad imagings of Love,  
Dream-children all, gold-haired and laughter-eyed,  
In silver cloudlets touched with rosy dawn ;

•                    \*                    \*                    \*                    \*                    \*

This multishadowy phantasmagory  
Of the inner soul-life, subtly changing, delicate,  
Ethereal as the interpresent gloom  
Of Imagery in some fair sleepy lake !

Till by such spiritual dioptrics viewed,  
The shadow turned the substance, substance shadow,  
And this fair solid globe would melt away,  
In ghostly apparitions, luminous mists :

Only the silhouette of a mocking Face  
Would ever vanish in their vanishings,  
• On that lone cliff beetling o'er foaming seas !

Wisdom to master Death this Power in Life !

•                    \*                    \*                    \*                    \*                    \*

And oft in soul-storm, suddenly becalmed,  
Visions in tumbling tides coursed through my brain.  
This sudden frenzy of the seeing soul,  
This world-dissolving Phantasy that rapt me,  
Was it the gift of that lone blinding cave ?

Such elemental consciousness self-spun  
In twilight cave imprisoned my dim soul,  
In whose long shadows danced and whirled all ghosts  
Of Love and Hope, as on Lethean shores !

All sick and faint I turned ; like a mountain rill  
That leaps from cavern dark, I wandered wide  
O'er gorse and purple heather, following oft  
A trail of golden mist upon the glades,  
To bathe my spirit in the morning dew  
Where wreathèd wood-nymphs trip it light and free.

I was one with the woods ; my body, the Earth ;  
I budded in the buds, and burgeoned fresh  
In the green shoots ; the tendrils were my veins ;  
My eyes blossomed on every bush ; my arms  
Waved in the tall spiked grass ; in the white fog  
The hill-side breathed with me ; the twirling leaves  
Vibrated through the pores of my own skin ;  
I was one with the woods ; my body, the Earth.

I was one with all creatures ; their life, mine :  
I sang on every bough ; from rock to rock  
I leapt, snorting the crisp air ; in the stream  
I frisked or dived or bathed my plumage gay ;  
A flight of cranes, I glided, swayed and curved,  
And the lone eagle poised me in mid-air ;  
I was one with all creatures ; their life, mine.

Until one reddening dawn, in a dell serene  
(My woodland dreams had crossed the world's wide belt)  
The jargoning of birds was in my ears,  
The winds came to me from Heaven's sloping marge,  
I saw the still Earth's heaving dark-green mounds  
And climbed the sunny steeps ; on a breezy height,  
Far above a wooded amphitheatre  
That sloped to a dim coast line on the north,  
Lone I stood, gazing on Creation's face,  
Our Mother, ancient, fecund, e'er renewed !  
I saw Her spirit brooding, like the dove,  
'Midst susurrations of the ripening corn,  
Saw her with mother-instinct rear and mould  
With a curve's plastic stress and sweep the beauty  
Of jungle bird and deer, saw rear and mould  
Peacock's starred tail and parrot's mail and crest,  
Respectful of the course of love and being  
In every living atom, speck of life !  
But as I looked, out crept a speck of life :  
A spotted spider, from the mottled grass  
'Neath a huge boulder, caught her tiny mate  
In lustful grip and dealt the fatal hug,  
A spotted lizard darted from a crevice,  
Glaring ; a spotted jay flew at it and screeched ;

A hooded hawk swooped down ; the royal eagle  
Sailed in, and eyed the quarry from the heavens !  
Then mists rose from the sea like a dark Djinn  
And coiled them all in folds voluminous ;  
The mists rolled on and blotched the scene ;  
Earth's face  
Was drawn to a grotesque with a monstrous frown !  
The mists rolled on ; the boulders loomed and shimmered,  
A dance of giant skeletons on the hills.

The mists rolled on, and writhing serpentlike  
Coiled and uncoiled; in a dense clammy fog  
All was wiped out, all but a dreadful gulf  
That gaped, and shut, and gaped, like a blind mouth,  
Then shaped into a bottomless abyss,  
A crater—as in a Mesozoic sea-bed,  
Leviathan's haunt—in whose vortices,  
Meseemed, swam round and round all hideous slimy shapes,  
Dark Monsters of the Deep, seadragon wroth,  
Ravening rhinodon and strangling octopod,  
Death's minions pasturing on some steep  
Mountainous mass of coiled ugliness  
With universal gurglings, hissings, groans !  
I saw where throned in the universal Deep  
Eternal Hunger sat his Queen beside,  
The Nightmare Fear-of-Death, dark Shapes  
That rule, misrule, the chaos-dance of Death-in-Life !

Wisdom to master Death the Power in Life !

# 26. P. SESHADRI

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[He had an arresting personality—which retained the charm of Adonais even at the age of fifty ! With his splendid gifts of head and heart—he was a wonderful man in many ways. The generations of students that passed through his hands still speak of him with affection and esteem. With his intimate contacts with persons that count—he wielded a wide influence and always used it for the good of others. He knew how to help and inspire all those that came into touch with him. He died rather prematurely, in his fifty-fifth year, but has left a name that will long be remembered by those who knew him, and a decent legacy to Indo-English poetry. The late Principal Seshadri was born in South India in September 1887. He received his academic education at the Pachaiyappa's College, Madras, and passed the B.A. and M.A. degree (in English literature) examinations of the Madras University in 1906 and 1910 respectively. Immediately after his B.A. he was appointed to the staff of his old College—where he worked till 1914. In that year he went to the College at Salem as its Principal. In 1916 he was appointed as Head of the Department of English at the newly started Benares Hindu University. Here he remained in that capacity till 1928, and then went over to Cawnpore as Principal of the Sanatan Dharma College. In 1931 he attended the conference of the World Federation of Teachers in America, and the Empire Conference of Universities at Edinburgh. The same year he was elected a member of the League of Nations Committee along with Prof. Gilbert Murray and others. After his return he was appointed as the Principal of the Government College at Ajmer and continued there till his sudden death in April 1942. A year or two before his demise he was made a M.B.E.—in recognition of his meritorious services to the cause of higher education in this country. In 1935 he contributed a chapter on “ The Universities of India ” to the *Year Book of Education* edited by Lord Eustace Percy.

The late Principal Seshadri's literary work consists of four slim volumes of verse, several stray poems in journals and quite a good number of literary essays. In 1935 I suggested to him that he should bring out collected editions of his poems and prose writings. He welcomed the idea and hinted that I might undertake the work with his support. Somehow, the work has not been done—much to my regret ! Should his brothers or sons care to accomplish this, they would surely be doing a good turn to the memory of the dear departed. The late Principal Seshadri was a man of varied activities

—writing of verse being one of them. He was a poet before he became a professor, and pedagogy did not strifle his poetry—as it often does maliciously in the case of many. His poetry reveals his ardent devotion to the Muse and his genuine gift of song. The most striking thing about his poetry is his remarkable skill in managing the sonnet-scheme. There is not much lyrical exuberance in his poetry on account of the rigid verse-forms he chooses. But this austerity has not cramped his poetic outlook or choked his poetic voice. Whether in his love sonnets or in his poems on Indian historical, social and religious themes, he exhibits pleasing gravity, sedate beauty, felicity of phrase and picturesqueness of imagery. Who can deny him a place in the pantheon of Indo-English poets ?]

## AT THE TEMPLE

Three little girls were on the temple-stair  
 Waiting for worship at the inner shrine ;  
 Their tiny hands betrayed a hidden sign  
 Of weariness, devoid of strength to bear  
 Their wealth of luscious fruit and offerings rare—  
 But still they stood. “What shall the Gods assign  
 To crown your lives,” I asked, “what blessings fine  
 Will cheer with happiness your faces fair ?”  
 “A mass of glittering jewels,” said one child,  
 “Bracelet and necklace, shining gold waist-band.  
 And pearl ear-drop.” “Fine robes of richest lace  
 And gayest foam-spun silk,” another will’d.  
 The third, with head bent down and trembling hand  
 Whispered, “A lovely partner on life’s ways.”

## RAKSHA BANDHAN

A piece of silken tassel tipped with gold,  
 Tied round the wrist by loving sister’s hands,  
 A sacred day in *Sravan*, when the lands  
 Are bathed in welcome rain, is said to hold  
 A potent charm for good. From days of old  
 This pretty faith has come and happy bands  
 Of brothers still pay heed to its commands  
 One day each year. Who will be rashly bold  
 And flout this festival as void of worth,  
 An ancient mummary—to which man shows  
 His slavish piety ? Let him, who knows



Of beings more devoted than the fair,  
Of wishes purer than a sister's care,  
And stronger powers than woman's love on earth.

## THE TEACHER

In halls of learning have I toiled these years  
And hourly sought to draw the youthful mind  
To love of knowledge, urging it to find  
The highest joy in books. No haunting fears  
Of fruitless work have chill'd my soul, and sneers  
Have not becalmed my endeavours ; no kind  
Of wavering faith, I trust, will ever blind  
My eyes to bliss that in this task appears.  
But then, what guerdon do I seek for all  
This work ? If once, some pupil, toiling hard  
Will find the rapture of a Master's word,  
And pausing gratefully my name recall,  
Tracing his joy, in part, to what he heard  
And learnt from me—it will be rich reward !

# 27. H. D. SETHNA

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[Two brothers and a sister—and all three poets, dreamers, idealists, enthusiasts, seekers of Truth and Beauty ! That indeed is a piece of rare fortune, and Mr. Sethna has it. Born in Bombay in December 1906, he was an eager student of Greek Philosophy in his College days, and obtained the M.A. degree of the Bombay University—with a thesis on Platonic Theory of Knowledge. Later he was at the Cambridge University for a year doing research in philosophy under Dr. A. C. Ewing. He was the founder-editor (in 1931 and for a few years after) of *The Orient*—a journal devoted to interpretation of the renascent spirit in modern Indian Culture. Some of his essays published in that journal have recently been collected in a book form under the title *Indian Horizons*, and reveal the author's power of creative interpretation. At present Professor of Philosophy at the Wadia College, Poona, he has not allowed his pedagogic work to stifle his artistic impulses. He is still an idealist,—dreaming of blue hill and skies, impatient of age that is conservative and eager to praise youth that is rebellious ! Ever an enthusiast of creative things, he is himself a shy creator of fascinating poems. A book of his poems under the suggestive title *Struggling Heights* is just published. Prof. Sethna's poems reveal two of his dominant characteristics, his patriotic fervour and his poetic longing. A close student of the political movements in this country during the last two decades, he expresses in some of his poems his reaction to the national struggle and strikes a vibrant patriotic note. In some other poems—and these are decidedly better—he plumbs the spiritual basis of his emotional response to colour and form and brings to the surface word-pictures of such sensitive experience as seem born out of a reminiscence of a strange ancient beauty seen by the mind. More steadfast loyalty to the Muse will surely help Prof. Sethna to write more powerful and beautiful poems—which will be a service to himself and to others.]

## WATERFALLS

The thunderous waterfall—  
    Its mighty outpour  
Like the effulgence  
    The skiey vastness bore

In the world's dawn.  
In the immense space  
It fell, a Titan's throw  
Of his great mace.

The moon-white flow of a  
Cascade over a crag  
As beauteous as the grace  
Of a leaping stag

Lost in the sylvan stillness  
Amid wild amaranth blowing  
And white birds on trees  
To pale silences glowing.

The warm-limbed waterfall,  
Over the naked hill's  
Mute rocky night  
Its rapturous splendour spills

And out of solitudes'  
Dark womb brings to birth  
Voices of virginal joy  
Upon this hoary earth !

## THE SEA

Great dancer ! With what winged grace  
You catch rhythms that no gesture  
In limb and form can ever trace  
Or clothe in any mortal form.  
The whole gamut of sound is at your call  
From the light whisper that awakes  
From its darkened sleep to the thunder's brawl  
Whose reverberations shake the earth.

You dance as if caught in the flow  
Of a nameless joy which in its rhythmic play  
Shapes the star's light and the moon's pale glow  
And the beauty of innumerable shores  
Long forgotten by mortal eyes,—whose colours and sounds  
Glimmer and throb across the mind's impatient bounds.

# 28. K. D. SETHNA

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[Silent, unobtrusive, and ever inward-looking, Mr. Sethna leads the vanguard of poetry in his family, and is undoubtedly a singer of aristocratic distinction. Born on November 25, 1904, he was educated at St. Xavier's School and College, Bombay. In Inter Arts he took both the Selby Scholarship for Logic and the Hughling Prize for English—a combination not achieved by anyone else yet. Passing the B.A. examination of the Bombay University with Honours in Philosophy, he again put up a performance not paralleled so far—namely, that he, a philosophy-student, and not a literature-student won the much-coveted Ellis Prize for English. And before he left College, he made his literary debut with a group of poems marked by a piercing psychical and intellectual passion. Published about the same time, his volume of critical essays entitled *Parnassians* elicited from H. G. Wells the prophetic remark : ‘ This young man will go far.’ And he has gone far—farther than the celebrated English writer could have meant or expected. He has gone far on the path of spiritual quest—with vision in his eyes and song on his lips. Attracted early in life towards Sri Aurobindo, twenty-four year old Mr. Sethna joined his Ashram and stayed there for nearly ten years. That was the turning point in his career, the spring-tide of his life. Under the Master's influence, Mr. Sethna's inspiration took a decisive spiritual turn which gave to his inherent keenness of thought and sensation a new purpose and point—helping it to penetrate unusual ranges of sight and feeling. This resulted in the writing of poems characterized by an illumined power of consciousness and a striking inwardness of word-suggestion and sound-suggestion that carries a concrete sense of some occult and spiritual Infinite. The volume of poems entitled *The Secret Splendour* which was published in 1941 has justly earned high praise from men and magazines that count. Keeper of luminous vigils and kin of endless God-horizonry, Mr. Sethna is a poet of profound thought and polished utterance. He is truly a spirit-illumined son of song—of whom Indo-English poetry may feel legitimately proud !]

## THE TRIUMPH OF DANTE

These arms, stretched through ten hollow years, have brought her  
Back to my heart ! A light, a hush immense  
Falls suddenly upon my voice of tears,  
Out of a sky whose each blue moment bears

The shining touch of that omnipotence.  
Ineffable the secrecies supreme  
Pass and elude my gaze—an exquisite  
Failure to hold some nectarous Infinite !  
The uncertainties of time grow shadowless—  
And never but with startling loveliness,  
A white shiver of breeze on moonlit water,  
Flies the chill thought of death across my dream.

For, how shall earth be dark when human eyes  
Mirror the love whose smile is paradise ?—  
A love that misers not its golden store  
But gives itself and yearns to give yet more,  
As though God's light were inexhaustible  
Not for His joy but this one heart to fill !

## TRUTH - VISION

How shall you see  
Through a mist of tears  
The laughing lips of beauty,  
The golden heart of years ?

Oh never say  
That tears had birth  
In the weeping soul of ages,  
The gloomy brow of earth !

Your eyes alone  
Carry the blame  
For giving tearful answers  
To questionings of flame.

What drew that film  
Across your sight  
Was only the great dazzle  
Of everlasting Light.

Frailty begot  
Your wounded gaze :  
Eagle your mood, O spirit,  
To see the golden Face !

# 29. MINNIE D. SETHNA

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[This young lady's poetry is a positive proof of the vital results real culture can achieve—which mere academic education and University degrees cannot. Miss Sethna who was born in Bombay studied up to Senior Cambridge only, and did not care to pursue that kind of education further—for she was after higher pursuits and deeper ecstasies. Leading a life of cultured leisure, she read much and travelled far. She has gone out of India twice—once to England and the Continent and another time to the Far East and the United States. 'A born poet' (in the words of Sri Aurobindo) and a lover of the Beautiful, she utilized the opportunity of her foreign travel to imbibe the essence of the varied cultures she came into contact with. This is evident in her poetry which shows a subtlety of atmospheric suggestion. But there is also another strain in her poetry which is significant of her ripe inner personality. An admirer of Sri Aurobindo and a frequent visitor to his Ashram, she gives a mystic touch to her thoughts and feelings. As a consequence, her poems are characterised by deep inwardness and spiritual intensity. Miss Sethna's poems lie scattered in journals and magazines, and when they are collected in a volume, she will surely receive the wide recognition that she justly deserves.]

## THE FLUTTER AT TWILIGHT

I try to deafen my ears to the music,  
But he stops not playing on his heartless flute ;  
Each note wrings my soul with infinite sadness ;  
I cry out but find that my voice is mute.

My window is crossed by a faint blue shadow,  
As he passes by in the quiet lane,  
Revealing an unattainable light  
And the darkness within me follows in pain.

I dread to hear the depth in his music ;  
Touched to his lips is his flute forever ;  
In my body the tunes are a fire of sweet seeking,  
Yet, like chill blasts, in my blood a shiver.

A dead lake touched by sudden storm-winds,  
A maddening whirlpool of unworded joy  
Churns within me, a far pale echo  
Of the secret that laughs in the eyes of the boy.

I watch for him daily through the golden cowdust,  
For the twilight lad with mischief overflowing ;  
To all he is a simple flute-gay cowherd,  
To me a promise gigantic and glowing.

## SANCTUARY

My dream city of blanched flat roofs !—  
When the gigantic equatorial moon  
Comes out from her portals like a priestess queen,  
And stills the aching flesh to an incensed swoon . . .

I sit in a corner of the sun-baked courtyard  
That is mercifully wrapt in the cool coming night,  
And the candle that is lit in the depth of my heart  
Revives its flame in the absence of light.

Though wide awake, I sleep in my being—  
Plumb deeper and deeper a cavernlike space . . .  
The bare floor hurts me with a limitless joy,  
And the eyes, trance-burdened, are sealed in my face.

My limbs feel heavy with a peace-numbed languor,  
As if turned to stone in a timeless relief ;  
Yet the body is sundered by a subtle knife  
And a pouring consciousness boundless though brief.

# 30. SHAHID SUHRAWARDY

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[He is now a member of the Public Service Commission, Bengal. But before he attained this well-deserved eminence in 1943—he had a varied and colourful career. Born at Midnapore on 24th October 1890, he took the B.A. degree from the Calcutta University, and later, the same degree from Oxford in 1914. From 1917 to 1920 he was Reader in English at the (Imperial) University of Moscow and the Women's University, Moscow. For the next six years he was joint Art Director and Producer, Moscow Art Theatre (European Group.) During the next three years he was attaché and Theatrical Expert at the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation of the League of Nations, Paris. From 1932 to 1943 he was Bageswari Professor of Fine Arts and Fellow of the Calcutta University.

Mr. Suhrawardy is essentially a man of fine literary taste, and both the essays in his *Prefaces* and his poems bear ample evidence to this fact. And in his essays as well as in his poems, his inspiration is mainly modern art and literature. In his own words "the source of many of them (poems) is my literary culture and not a deep spiritual experience ; perhaps, sometimes....a wistfulness.... a half-opened hope....a visual enchantment..but nothing more." He is a poet with cosmopolitan interests, and there is nothing specially Indian about his poetry. On the other hand, his varied experiences in different countries have helped him to import into his poetry elements which are not always easily recognizable. If one were to read his poems without knowing their author's name, one may take them to be the productions of some modern English or continental writer. But what matters most in Mr. Suhrawardy's poetry is the flashing felicity with which it flows. Very simple words and phrases, set in unexpected contexts, acquire fresh meanings and new associations. And with their seductive rhythms the poems convert their pathetic and somewhat melancholy undertone into a pleasant aesthetic sensation. The poems in the series—*An Old Man's Songs*—are tuneful echoes of regret for vanished youth. Their rhythmic melody is haunting and lends impressiveness to the sentiments. Mr. Suhrawardy is avowedly a modernist in technique—especially in his long poem *The Indian Tragedy*. In a letter to the present writer, the poet says : "The sole interest of this poem, beside that it was never published here or in England, is that it is an attempt at Modernism." This poem was originally printed many years ago in Paris by a group of Surrealists—who also illustrated it. On reading Mr. Suhrawardy's *Essays in Verse*, Gordon Bottomley



wrote to the author's friend, the poet, Robert Trevelyan—"At last here is an Indian who is not Matthew Arnold dressed in a *Sari*." On reading *The Indian Tragedy*, one cannot help saying "Here is T. S. Eliot in Indian costume!" The poem could easily have been the work of Edith Sitwell or T. S. Eliot. Mr. Suhrawardy's poetry in general illustrates one modern phase in the development of Indo-English poetry. There are those among us who cleverly (and sometimes clumsily!) copy the technique of Ezra Pound or Stephen Spender. Mr. Suhrawardy has caught the rhythms and technique of English Modernist poets by direct contact with them and, what is more important, has made them his own. No one can find fault with a poet for the technique he chooses for the expression of his ideas and feelings. All kinds of successful experiments are necessary for the progress of poetry, as indeed for the progress of any art. As such, the one thing that Mr. Suhrawardy should remember is not to stifle his authentic poetic instinct under the heavy burden of his official work! Nor should he lose the note-book containing his verses in the course of his frequent railway journeys; nor should he forget his manuscript poems at the residences of his friends or hosts! He can always rest assured of an audience "fit though few"—for his highly sensitive poetry.]

## UNDER THE TREES

I was reading a book  
About old things,  
When a flutter of wings  
On the high trees  
Drew me out of my room,  
And as I unresisting lay  
Under the green boughs  
Shaded from the keen sun,  
I loved the thought  
That I was alive this day,  
And not when starched kings  
And frail queens with storm-torn looks,  
With narrow brows held in low crowns  
And gem-besprinkled cloaks,  
And long eyes and large stare,  
Lived in the gloom  
Of painted room,  
And passion swirled around them  
Like blood fresh-shed.  
And so with my unfinished book  
As pillow to my head,  
Unregretting the dead,

I mused away,  
While the birds I love  
In a commingled throng  
Sang through my dreams  
Their heedless song.

## • WHEN YOU ARISE

When you arise  
And go your way,  
As you will one day,  
And the gay tenderness of your eyes  
Will change to hate,  
I shall bend low  
Nor utter any word,  
But abating my sense  
With that vile wisdom life has taught  
Pretend indifference,  
And like some lone bird  
Brooding over my pain  
Watch your supple gait,  
And the proud tower of your youth  
Standing once again  
Besides the primrose landslides of the South.

O Friend, if now,  
When every look of yours  
Strews sparks of loveliness,  
In happy mood,  
Like warm guests at a feast,  
We suddenly take leave  
Of brimful oft-repeated cups,  
Nor know the anguish nor the dull despair  
Of implacable fate—  
O Friend, if the hour would strike now  
—As strike it must—  
And you gathering your heavy hair,  
Shaking intoxication from your brow,  
Trample my longing in the dust—  
And not turning once  
Walk your triumphal way  
To-day . . . .

# 31. RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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[What words can summarize the cultural uniqueness of this Poet-laureate of Humanity ? He achieved a phenomenal name which will outlast generations. The details of Rabindranath Tagore's life (1861-1941) are too well-known to need recapitulation. He died full of years and honours—having made the richest possible contribution to Indian culture and world thought. But how does he have a place in this anthology of poems written in English ? To exclude him on mere technical grounds would be sheer impertinence. To include him as a matter of condescension would be worse than impertinence ! Tagore did write in his younger days some verses in English and they are still available. But to represent him here by those pieces would be doing him great injustice—for his greatest poems were written in Bengali. Fortunately, some of these he himself has translated into English. But here again there is a difficulty, for his translations are not in orthodox verse-forms. They are in prose. Yet—what does it matter ? Has he not shown us to what poetical use prose may be put ? Have not the rhythms of his prose-translations the effect of poetry ? Will his prose-poetry sound better or read better—if presented in conventional metrical patterns ? It serves no useful purpose to discuss these questions. One can do no better than recognise Tagore's unquestionable poetic genius and bow down in admiration. He created a tradition in a new type of poetry and has left it to India and the world as a legacy. There is hardly any Indian poet—in whatever language he may express his thoughts—who has not been influenced by what may be described as the Tagore-thought and the Tagore-tradition. How can Tagore, therefore, be overlooked in any anthology of Indian poetry ? Surely, it is no special honour to him to be included here ; the volume honours itself with his poems !]

## LEAVE THIS CHANTING...

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads ! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut ? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee !

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil !

Deliverance ? Where is this deliverance to be found ? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation ; he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense ! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained ? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

### WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR . . .

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high ;

Where knowledge is free ;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls ;

Where words come out from the depth of truth ;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection ;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit ;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action —

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

### DELIVERANCE IS NOT FOR ME . . .

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love.

# 32. SUBHO TAGORE

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[Revolt is in his blood and liberty in his vision ! Poet, playwright, painter, 'progressivist,' sculptor, socialist—young Subho Babu is a person of varied gifts. A grand nephew of poet Rabindranath, and a member of the wealthy Jorasanko Tagore family, he sold away all his property and ancestral estate a few years ago—because he was against the capitalistic system ! Born on 3rd January 1912 in Calcutta, Subho Babu published his first book—*Manjari* (stories for children)—when he was just twenty-three years old. The next year he published his first book of Bengali verse—*Setar*. In 1927 he joined the Government School of Arts, and two years after executed a fine bas-relief of his grand-uncle, Rabindranath. It was reproduced in "Silpi" and brought him name as a sculptor. In the same year he staged two of his own playlets (himself taking part in them)—*Rudraraj* at Grand Hotel Buffet and *Pathik* at the Y. W. C. A. After two years' stay at the School of Arts, he left it in order to take up independent line of work—with his own technique of painting. He went to England in 1937 to study modern art and literary movements in that country and in Europe. While there, he was elected a member of the P. E. N. Club, London. Returning to India the next year, he held an exhibition of his paintings (first one-man show of his works) at the Continental Hotel, Calcutta, in 1940. His new art-technique was at once recognized and praised by discriminating art-critics. In 1942 he held another exhibition of his paintings at Calcutta under the patronage of Lord Sinha of Raipur—in aid of distressed Chinese poets and artists. The same year he joined the Viswa-Bharati Ladies' College at Srinagar, Kashmir State, as head of the Art Section. But he soon returned to Calcutta to continue his own original work. He is at present making arrangements for the publication of an art album—"The Art of Subho Tagore" (with fifteen poems and fifteen paintings)—which includes comments from famous art-critics and the Press.

Subho Tagore's literary activity is no less varied and prolific than his work as an artist. In 1933 he founded a progressive group of writers, and conducted the monthly journal *Bhabiswat*—which created a sensation by its outspokenness. His published works include—*Pancy-O-Pekoe* (Bengali verses, 1933), *Kankar* (Bengali verses, 1933), *Sapna Ses* (Bengali verses 1938), *Rubble* (English translation of original Bengali verses, 1936), and *Dambaru* (anthology of English verses by different writers, 1937). He is now pre-

paring to bring out shortly English renderings of selections from his love poems in Bengali under the name—*Flames of Passion*. He is also busy working for the publication of an Art and Letters Miscellany—both in English and Bengali. As a poet, Subho Babu has a new vision and a new voice. Caring not for formalities and conventions, he sings with freedom of all that touches him. The disintegrating condition of the present world has wrung from him some very striking reactions. He is a poet of revolt and liberty at present ; he may soon be a poet of affirmation and ecstasy ! Subho Babu's career deserves to be followed with keen interest.]

## MY POEM

No king can conquer her,  
 No boundary of landmark can bind her soul,  
 She belongs not to any society.  
 Imperialist ?  
 Fascist ?  
 She is neither.  
 Communist never she is.  
 Yet you may find in her  
 That regal pomp of the pagan princess,  
 That salt sweat of the soviet peasants  
 And that firmness of a fascist dictator.  
 Sometimes even like the blue Danube  
 Her every artery surcharged with upsurging blood :  
 The deep blood of high aristocracy  
 And the warm blood of low mobocracy.  
 Self-delighted she swings  
 In the cradles of ideal to ideal.  
 And from the hands of the bourgeois  
 To the poverty-smitten working class  
 She passes on—  
 She passes on  
 From the hands of the imperialist to the communist.  
 But one day, when one by one  
 Imperialism, Communism  
 Fascism,  
 Nay, all the 'isms' of politics  
 Will decay and disappear—  
 Even then she will remain alive !  
 Alive with the fulness of life and laughter.

No king can control her,  
Nor can any community ;  
No dictator dare command her,  
Neither can any 'ism.' assert over her.  
There she stands alone—  
She—my Poem,  
As a part of eternity !

## T H E M O B

People be damned—  
Don't talk before me  
About the people.  
I despise them.

Traitor to their Saviour  
From the very birth ;  
They are the ancient culprits  
Who once had crowned the Christ  
With the crown of thorns.

Through ages they have stabbed  
Many a seeker of truth  
Who gave them solace,  
Many an innocent worshipper of Beauty  
Who brought boon to their broken hearts ;  
The people killed them  
And killed them outright  
Without food,  
Without sympathy,  
Without affection.

These people ? I know them very well.  
They are the traditional criminals,  
They are the ruthless barbarians,  
The only living hindrances  
To the upliftment of mankind.

In the Court of Culture

Will not they be condemned as mad mobs ?

And hanged mercilessly

On a charge of

Murdering musicians,

Artists,

Poets,

Idealists,

And geniuses

Without sympathy,

Without food,

Without affection,

For ages, ages and ages ?

No, No,

Yet have I forgiven you

Oh foolish people !

As you are ignorant and insensible

I have forgiven all your faults.

Though crucified by

Your vile comments,

For your good

I have dedicated my life and soul,

All the poems I have composed,

All the pictures I have painted.

And with the garland of your contempt

On my neck

I shall compose

Songs,

Pictures,

Poems,

Which will bring to your heart

Ever increasing joy

And supreme consciousness.



# 33. N. V. THADANI

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[Modest in the extreme, this Sindhi gentleman who writes excellent poetry, plays and philosophical essays, and who is the present Principal of one of the premier Colleges in Imperial Delhi, does not desire to be known as a poet, is not keen in being represented in anthologies of this kind, and is shy to reveal the dates and details of his career ! He has published four volumes of very bright verses between 1916 and 1932, but has not cared to remember where they were reviewed, when, and by whom ! Richard Garnett gave a highly appreciative review of his first book of poems *Krishna's Flute* ; but the poet does not remember whether it was in *The Athenaeum* or the *New Statesman*. Principal Thadani may afford to ignore all these, but lovers of Indo-English poetry cannot but admire his verses. Born at Hyderabad (Sind) on 4th August 1890, Mr. Thadani took the B.A. and M.A. degrees, in 1909 and 1911 respectively, from the University of Bombay. From 1913 to 1917 he was Professor of English in the Hindu College, Delhi, and since 1917 has been Principal of that well-known institution. During the last twenty years nearly, Principal Thadani has been following philosophical pursuits. The result of this is to be seen in his monumental work—*The Mystery of the Mahabharata*—in five volumes (1931-35). *Mira and Mahavir* or *Belief in God* (1941) and *Sacrifice of Sita* or *The Essence of the Ramayana* (1943)—though written in the form of one-act plays—are essentially philosophical expositions. Among the manuscripts he has now ready for the press are two volumes dealing with problems of Hindu philosophy, a play, and a book of poems. . . . As a poet, Principal Thadani is the master of sweet and fluent expression. Technically perfect, his poems have a peculiar fascination born of a happy union of poetic preception and philosophic significance. Both his lyricism and contemplation are under control, and endow his poetry with a serene and sedate charm. The two poems included here are taken from his *Garden of the East* (1932). The poems in this volume are kisses of an ancient lyre—echoes of celebrated Persian poets like Firdausi, Omar Khayyam, Anwari, Sadi, Hafiz, Jalal-ud-din-rumi, and Jami. But they are not translations or renderings. “ They are rather intended to re-create the spirit and idea of each master of song in a new form, with just enough of the original atmosphere to be reminiscent.” How successful Principal Thadani has been in this attempt is evident from the two poems quoted here.]

## A VISION

I slept and dreamt :—How wondrous was the dream,  
Transforming forty years of life to be  
One moment, glancing in the fitful beam  
Of Time's light shadow on Eternity !  
And love, youth, beauty, and each fond desire  
Were drawn into the tangles of a tress,  
Where night and day in secret silence played ;  
And an ethereal music, full of fire  
Of heart's unutterable loneliness,  
The Nightingale did pour, unseen and overhead.

Music and minstrel !—wine and ecstasy !—  
Fragrance and light,—the hyacinth and rose !  
A cypress-form, and a Narcissus-eye,  
And love and beauty, and a heart that knows !  
And musky hair, a longing, languid gaze,  
And ruby lips, so eager and apart,  
And heaving bosom, kindling at each word !—  
Is that a vision that the eye surveys,  
Warm to the touch, by living passions stirred,  
Or frenzied Fancy's thought-eluding art ?

Sing thou, O Nightingale !—the pallid Moon  
Doth languish for thy echo, and behold,  
The rose upon its bed doth sigh and swoon.  
Alas, will sweet love die and youth be old ?  
Bring, Saqi, bring thy soul-impurpled wine,—  
Passion and pride and power in one deep glass,—  
That I may drink away this eager strife :  
Fear not, O heart, we drink by law divine ;  
And if the sages frown, nor let us pass,  
Receive from God the welcome of our life.

What says the harp and tell me, what the flute ?  
And what's the tune the aged Minstrel plays ?  
"List to the voice, and let the tongue be mute ;—  
List to the voice, list to the voice !"—he says.

Alas, we see and suffer, and in vain

The hungry beggar sighs to be a King,  
And many thousand hearts are laid in dust ;  
The Pearl's a gift of Heaven ; so pass again

The honied glass, bedewed with joy of spring ;—  
The memory of the Past, the Future's trust.

Life is a field with many a thorn and flower,

Where many Pigeons, many Parrots come ;  
And the lone Nightingale in secret bower

Bewails her lot and makes my sorrow dumb.  
But where's the Phoenix with the golden crown,

Sky-scaling wings, and kingdom-quelling eye,  
Which having seen there is naught else to see ?

And where the heart that gazes with a frown,

And yet doth melt to hear a frozen sigh ?—  
And where, alas, is there a place for me ?

Ah, let the people hear, the sages chide ;  
They read the law, but know not what is love.  
Their eyes are keen to question and divide,—

Our mystic rites of midnight to reprove.  
Then sing of music, beauty, love, and wine,

The honied lips, and union yet to be,  
And from the anguished heart its fear dispel :  
Can Heaven itself the knot of Fate untwine ?

Or puny mortals change its high decree ?—  
Then sing and sigh, and bid the world farewell.

Sikander's glass is like Jamshed's : Behold

The realms of Dara broken, and be wise ;  
And see there also drawn in fold on fold

The image of my soul's unfathomed eyes !  
He never dies who lives by law of love,—

The wondrous alchemy of youth that makes  
A Karoon of a beggar, prince a slave ;

So let us drink :—In Heaven they place above

The pious Shiekh, the heart that weeps and wakes,  
Whom no one knows, nor any cares to save.

The world's a ten days' miracle of grace,  
They say ;—but do not think that it will last  
Even for that little lingering space ;  
    So live today, tomorrow all is past.  
The secret of my soul's immensity  
    Is more profound than Hatim's boundless heart ;  
And all the pearls the unfathomed Ocean bears  
Less than a single drop that tenderly  
    Clings to my drowsy eye-lids, loth to part,  
Caught by the sighing zephyr unawares.

The world is called to great Solaiman's feast,  
    And many a Dara, Ka'oos and Jamshed,  
Attend in state, and many a bird and beast ;  
    And many a luxury's before them laid.  
But wilt thou also go, O heart of mine,  
    To see a moment's triumph and return,  
Sad to the core and silent ?—Where are they  
That wore the crown and feasted ? Music, wine,  
    And Minstrel, where are they ? Yet do not mourn ;  
The world's three days' Caravansarai.

Kindle the lamp :—the breeze hath fanned the fire,  
    Now blowing from the garden where she lives.  
Kindle the lamp: the rose of heart's desire  
    Is glowing in her garden, and she gives  
Its fragrance to the winds to comfort thee.  
    Kindle the lamp : it now will soon be night,—  
The star-lit page of love's unwhispered lore.  
Awake and dream; let wine and music be ;  
    And see but once the world-illuming light :  
Kindle the lamp,—to quench it evermore !

—[HAFIZ]

## THE LORD OF LIFE

Each moment in a newer form  
    Does he appear  
    And disappear ;  
In light and shade, in calm and storm,  
    In joy and fear,  
    And far and near.

On earth and sky, in wave and wind,  
In night and day,  
And unconfined,  
In whole and part, in heart and mind,  
At rest and play  
Of eye and ear.

He fills the glass with ruby wine,  
And smiles to see  
Its joy divine ;  
And drinks away this heart of mine,  
In ecstasy  
Of smile and tear.

The trembling secret of my soul  
Is now revealed  
Beyond control ;  
But he can make my bosom whole,  
To whom I yield  
This heart of fear.

He is the glass, he is the wine,  
He is the lips,  
'And joy divine ;  
And he is all of me and mine,—  
His own he sips,  
To hold me dear.

He is the mask of sky and earth,  
Of dewy flowers  
And star-light's birth ;  
The host, the guest, the joy and mirth  
Of passing hours  
In their career.

He is the music and the lute,  
The singer's soul,  
The listener mute ;  
And he the seed, the flower, the fruit,—  
The guide, the goal,  
The pathway clear.

The present, future, and the past,  
Are his who is,  
And who will last ;  
His lips of Love on life are cast,—  
Her eyes to kiss,  
Her brows to clear.

He wished to be,—and so, behold !  
The world arose  
In fold on fold,—  
In radiance brighter far than gold ;—  
He held it close  
In sphere on sphere !

Each moment in a newer form  
Does he appear  
And re-appear ;  
In light and shade, in calm and storm,  
In joy and fear,  
And far and near.

—[JAMI]

# 34. S. UMAMAHESHWAR

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[He died in his fortieth year in tragic circumstances—closing a useful and promising career. Had Fate permitted him to live longer, he would surely have enriched Indo-English poetry with more and more of his verses and made a lasting name for himself. He was born in 1902 in the Travancore State. Belonging to an economically and educationally backward community, he had to contend against several odds during his early years. With undaunted courage, and with literary aspirations and devotion to lofty ideals, he pushed his way up. He took the B.A. Honours degree in English language and literature from the Madras University in 1925. The next year he was appointed lecturer in English in the Maharajah's College of Arts at Trivandrum. A few years after, he was transferred to the English Department of the Maharajah's College of Science—where he worked till his death from an unfortunate bus accident on 5th March, 1942. As a lecturer, the late Mr. Umamaheshwar was a source of inspiration to his students, helping and encouraging them in all their healthy activities. He was also connected with the Scout Movement, the Trivandrum Young Hindu Movement and many other social activities. A self-made man, he exemplified in himself great ideals of service and sacrifice, and led a life of plain living and high thinking. A frequent contributor of literary articles to newspapers and journals, the late Mr. Umamaheshwar, however, made his mark as a poet early in life. He published four substantial volumes of poems and a few plays. His poems are offerings in the temple of the universal heart of Mother Humanity. They enshrine, not courtesan fancies, but deep thoughts and wistful longings. A bright yearning for Beauty and quenchless thirst for uplifting dreams and universal love are the dominant characteristics of his poetry. The following prophetic lines from a poem which he wrote just before his death are characteristic of Umamaheshwar, the poet :

He carved an empire at the point of the sword ;  
I wandered and wandered with a song in my head  
And I made out a marvel with a wondrous little word,  
And I fell down at last and soon I was dead !]

## BEAUTY'S IN OUR MIDST

Beauty's in our midst. She trails  
Her tresses through the tangled stars,  
Her garments through the dawns and eves ;  
She trips on the green threshold of Spring.

She pours her stainless radiance  
Of moist silver, moon-yellowed  
Down through the transparence of time,  
And lies like an angelic light kidnapped,

In languorous, wondrous, innocence,  
As if some song had melted down !  
When ranging through the skies for joy,  
Slip once, Oh Beauty, into my heart !

Gaily you go to the festival,  
Nymph-like, be-flowered, blushing, gay ;  
Thou Queen, thyself the Love and Pain,  
Thyself the sweetness of the Earth !

Gaily you go to the festival  
Of Existence, thyself the Giver ;  
Thou tak'st the world up in thine arms,  
And kissest with the orient beams.

Mother, Oh thy unsung grace  
As in thy bower on the brink of Heaven,  
Beside the bath of the wary stars,  
And the resting place of the love-lorn clouds ;

Beside, where the moon faints soft away,  
In the rose breast of the impassioned dawn,  
Thou sit'st with myrtle and jasmines round,  
And lotuses singing love idylls !

And peacocks' glorious irises  
Awake in myriad faery eyes ;  
As if revelling colours rose,  
Lifting their shoulders against time !



A crowd of panting picturesque thoughts,  
All gazing into Eternity ;  
Or souls of flowers imprisoned,  
Or crystals learning star secrets !

Oh, Beauty dazzles delight by,  
While swans in marble nunnery,  
Stand shadowed in the bluish depth  
Of a silent green-grown spring-fringed pool !

## I BUILT A DOME

I built a dome of coloured dreams,  
And Hope's red radiance rayed around ;  
The magic of a thousand tunes,  
Like sounding perfume filled the air.

Visions, evanescent and pure,  
Unrolled, of God and man and world ;  
How shall I say what sights I saw,  
Confused in eddying rhapsodies ?

Vast wonders of the universe,  
Witnessed in moments of the soul ;  
The near was moved away like a veil,  
And the Living Far, flamed high above !

Entranced and bliss-benumbed, oh then,  
I felt the Truth in very touch ;  
Now, like a pillar of fire it goes,  
Yonder, beckoning 'fore my sight.

A vision floateth ever in my eye,  
As a wafting cloud in the summer sky ;  
An echoing strain tempteth my ear ;  
A wonder-land is where I stand.

A rainbow spreads like Heaven's smile,  
Song-like coursing across time,  
Or like a faery's streaming vest,  
Or the laughter of the cherubims !

Loveliness is everywhere,  
It coos in my ear and runs away ;  
Romance follows me as my bride,  
We stray within a flower-bourne.

We go visiting unto the stars,  
The universe is our domain ;  
Pretty fancies sing our way,  
While visions show the path for us.

# 35. SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

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[He shed lustre on himself, on the religion which he professed, on the philosophy which he preached, and on the country to which he belonged. He lived for a brief span of forty years (from 9th January 1862 to July 4, 1902) and yet achieved a luminous name which will echo for long in the Halls of Time. He was Narendra Nath Dutt before he took *sanyas* and became Swami Vivekananda. By birth a Bengali Kayastha, he received a good education, graduating from a Christian College in Calcutta. As a young man—"he could box, swim, row, and had a passion for horses. He was the favourite of youth and the arbiter of fashion." He was a good musician, and his voice was "an admirable baritone having the vibrations of a Chinese gong." Even in his youth he alternated between the call of a life of luxury and a life of renunciation. Finally, when he met Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansa at the age of eighteen, his future was settled. Dedicating his all at the feet of the Master, Swami Vivekananda became a new power, "a young artist-prince of the Renaissance." After a few years of preparation, he emerged at Madras at the close of 1892—as a reformer and religious teacher, as the spokesman of the poor and oppressed people, as the messenger of a new dynamic gospel of Hinduism which sought to awaken the lethargic spirit of the people, as the prophet of New India. The impression he created at the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893, and in other countries like Japan and England; the admiring followers he enlisted for himself; the Ramkrishna Order which he established for propagating the spirit of Karmayoga; the two monasteries which he opened at Belur and Mayavati for social and philanthropic work—all these are well-known.

Swami Vivekananda is known as a great soul, as one of God's good messengers. But what is not so well-known is the fact that he was a poet too, that he utilized the medium of poetry for the expression of his godly and philosophic ideas. His message—whether in his speeches or writings or poems—is the same—the message of a dynamic Advaitist. But in his poetry, his message acquires a peculiar accent and emphasis and appeals more strikingly than in his speeches or writings. Swami Vivekananda is not a poet in the conventional sense of the word, but belongs to the category of singer-saints—Kabir, Chaitanya, Tukaram and Nanak. His vision and voice as expressed in his poetry are a trumpet note to awaken the mass-mind, a clarion call to the spiritual essence in Man. It is the poetry of stirring thought—poetry that will live as long as Man and God live !]

## THE SONG OF THE FREE

The wounded snake its hood unfurls,  
The flame stirred up doth blaze,  
The desert air resounds the calls  
Of heart-struck lion's rage :

The cloud puts forth its deluge strength  
When lightning cleaves its breast,  
When the soul is stirred to its inmost depth  
Great ones unfold their best !

Let eyes grow dim and heart grow faint  
And friendship fail and love betray,  
Let fate its hundred horrors send  
And clotted darkness block the way—

All nature wear one angry frown  
To crush you out—still know, my soul,  
You are Divine. March on and on,  
Nor right nor left, but to the goal !

Nor angel I, nor man nor brute,  
Nor body, mind, nor he nor she,  
The books do stop in wonder mute  
To tell my nature ;—I am He !

Before the sun, the moon, the earth,  
Before the stars or comets free,  
Before e'en Time has had its birth  
I was, I am and I will be !

The beauteous earth, the glorious sun,  
The calm sweet moon, the spangled sky,  
Causation's laws do make them run,  
They live in bonds, in bonds they die—

And mind its mantle, dreamy net,  
Casts o'er them all and holds them fast.  
In warp and woof of thought are set  
Earth, hells and heavens, or worst or best.

Know these are but the outer crust—  
All space and time, all effect, cause,  
I am beyond all sense, all thought,  
The witness of the universe !

Not two nor many, 'tis but one.  
And thus in me all ones I have,  
I cannot hate, I cannot shun  
Myself from me—I can but love !

From dreams awake, from bonds be free !  
Be not afraid. This mystery,  
My shadow, cannot frighten me !  
Know once for all that I am He !

### THE SONG OF THE SANNYASIN

Wake up the note ! the song that had its birth  
Far off, where worldly taint could never reach ;  
In mountain caves, and glades of forest deep,  
Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth or fame  
Could ever dare to break ; where rolled the stream  
Of knowledge, truth and bliss that follows both.  
Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat, Om* ”!

Strike off thy fetters ! Bonds that bind thee down,  
Of shining gold, or darker, baser ore ;  
Love, hate—good, bad—and all the dual throng.  
Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free ;  
For fetters though of gold, are not less strong to bind ;  
Then, off with them, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat, Om* ”!

Let darkness go ; the will-o-the-wisp that leads  
With blinking light to pile more gloom on gloom.  
This thirst for life, for ever quench ; it drags  
From birth to death, and death to birth, the soul.  
He conquers all who conquers self. Know this  
And never yield, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat, Om* ”!

“ Who sows must reap,” they say, “ and cause must bring  
The sure effect ; good, good ; bad, bad ; and none  
Escape the law. But who so wears a form  
Must wear the chain.” Too true ; but far beyond  
Both name and form is Atman, ever free.  
Know thou art that, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat, Om* ”!

They know not truth, who dream such vacant dreams  
As father, mother, children, wife and friend.  
The sexless self ! whose father He ? whose child ?  
Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but one ?  
The self is all in all, none else exists ;  
And thou are that, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat, Om* ”!

There is but one—The Free—The knower-self !  
Without a name, without a form or stain.  
In Him is Māyā, dreaming all this dream.  
The witness, He appears as nature, soul.  
Know thou art that, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat, Om* ”!

Where seekest thou ? That freedom, friend, this world,  
Nor that, can give. In books and temples vain  
Thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds  
The rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament,  
Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat, Om* ”!

Say, “ Peace to all ; From me no danger be  
To aught that lives : In those that dwell on high,  
In those that lowly creep, I am the self in all !  
All life both here and there, do I renounce,  
All heavens, and earths and hells, all hopes and fears.”  
Thus cut thy bonds, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat, Om* ”!

Heed then no more how body lives or goes,  
Its task is done. Let Karma float it down ;  
Let one put garlands on, another kick  
This frame ; say naught. No praise or blame can be  
Where praiser, praised, and blamer, blamed are—one.  
Thus be thou calm Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat, Om* ”!

Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed  
Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman  
As his wife can ever perfect be ;  
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he  
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro’ Māyā’s gates.  
So, give these up, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat Om* ”!

Have thou no home ? What home can hold thee, friend ?  
The sky thy roof ; the grass thy bed ; and food,  
What chance may bring, well cooked or ill, judge not.  
No food or drink can taint that noble self  
Which knows itself. Like rolling river free  
Thou ever be, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat Om* ”!

Few only know the truth. The rest will hate  
And laugh at thee, great one ; but pay no heed.  
Go thou, the free, from place to place, and help  
Them out of darkness, Māyā's veil. Without  
The fear of pain or search for pleasure, go  
Beyond them both, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat, Om* ”!

Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent  
Release the Soul for ever. No more in birth,  
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor Man. The “ I ”  
Has all become, the all is “ I ” and Bliss ;  
Know thou art that, Sannyasin bold ! say—“ *Om Tat Sat, Om* ”!

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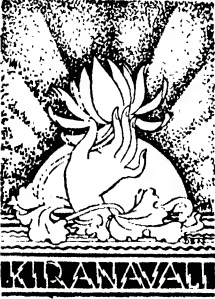
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किरणावलि



# A SERIES OF ANTHOLOGIES ON INDO-ENGLISH LITERATURE

*Edited by*

**Prof. V. N. BHUSHAN**

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Indo-English literature is now an established fact—no longer a vague something. It has been increasing both in quality and quantity—and a whole century of endeavour and achievement is there to its credit. Poetry, drama, fiction, criticism—in all these branches of creative writing our authors have produced solid and significant work,—which unfortunately has not yet been sufficiently estimated and recognised. While some individual writers have been able to attract public attention and appreciation—Indo-English literature as such still remains to be hailed and honoured as a thing of aesthetic beauty and artistic value. For one thing, the best specimens of Indo-English literature are not available to the public in a systematic form which will help them to have a synoptic view of it. That is one reason why these anthologies have been planned. Secondly, they are expected to clear the prejudice against Indo-English literature—that still unhappily exists both in this country and abroad. Our own people look down upon our writers in English with something of contempt for attempting to give expression to their creative urge in a language that is not ours. And those to whom the English language legitimately belongs think it impertinent on our part to use it—under the settled conviction that we cannot use it effectively and successfully. The anthologies will reveal that both these prejudices are unfounded, and that our writers have achieved astonishing results even while using a medium of expression not strictly their own. Thirdly, the anthologies will help to bring together the writers belonging to different parts in this country and bind them in a common literary fellowship. And it is also possible that these anthologies—many copies of which are scheduled to be sent abroad—will pave the way for a better cultural understanding between

India, England and the other English-speaking countries of the world.

To begin with, four anthologies have been planned : *THE PEACOCK LUTE* (anthology of poems), *THE MOVING FINGER* (anthology of critical essays), *THE EARTHEN BOWL* (anthology of short stories), and *THE BLAZING SHRINE* (anthology of plays). Each anthology will be a sumptuous volume of about 200 pages (Royal quarto) containing — selections from the works of distinguished writers in the field, as complete a bibliography as possible of writings published in the subject, a critical introduction, and brief biographical notes about the authors included. That anthologies of this kind have not so far been presented to the public is itself a justification for this huge venture. And, if without giving cause for cavilling, the anthologies serve their intended purpose, they will not have been published in vain. The work of editing all these four anthologies is, appropriately enough, in the hands of Prof. V. N. Bhushan who is himself a poet, playwright, critic and short-story writer of established reputation. What with his personal contacts with many writers of Indo-English literature, his fastidious taste and his discerning judgment, there is no doubt that he will make the anthologies model ones of their kind.

—The Publishers.





## ERRATA

- Page 43 Line 8 in the poem Peacork should be read as Peacock.
- Page 48 Line 3 from bottom Af should be read as At.
- Page 58 Line 1 from top Loyally should be read as Loyalty.
- Page 64 Line 12 from bottom Conventioned should be read as Conventional.
- Page 69 Stanza 4 line 6 Bahist should be read as Bahisht.
- Page 75 Line 5 from top Edinberough should be read as Edinburgh.
- Page 91 Line 21 from top Quotation mark " after the word Genuine.
- Page 94 Line 2 from top Austeres should be read as Austere.
- Page 96 Line 15 from bottom Three should be read as There.
- Page 96 Line 6 from bottom Than should be read as Them.
- Page 99 Line 1 from top Gift should be read as Girt.
- Page 102 Stanza 3 line 3 one 'smell' is to be omitted.
- Page 107 Line 5 from top the first In should be read as Is.
- Page 109 Line 16 from top Hill should be read as Hills.



